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Michael Ignatieff: London, Paris, Vienna

Poe's disputed reputation

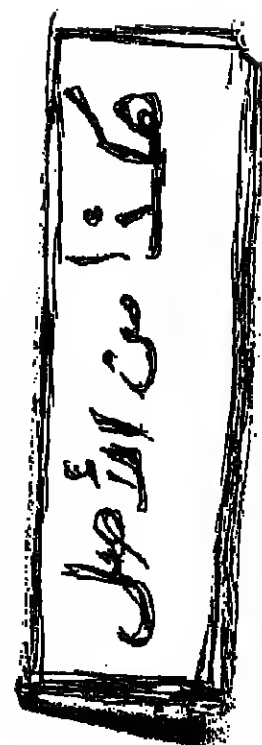
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Winslow Homer's "Sleigh Ride", c1893, reproduced from *The Bostonians: Painters of an elegant age, 1870-1930* by Trevor J. Fairbrother (235pp, with 53 colour plates and 115 black-and-white illustrations. Northeastern University Press, £39.25, 087846 271 6). A review of *Winslow Homer Watercolours* appears on page 17.

Public places, private spaces

Michael Ignatieff

DONALD J. OLSEN
The City as a Work of Art. London, Paris, Vienna
341pp. Yale University Press. £19.95.
030028709

Cities have distinct personalities. Donald Olsen's marvellous and lavishly illustrated book, *The City as a Work of Art*, is a comparative study in three of the greatest nineteenth-century personalities. Since both Vienna and Paris have long been celebrated as works of art, the most interesting and welcome part of his book is his celebration of grubby, grumpy London, the ugly duckling of Europe's great cities.

If you have ever tried to take a Parisian friend around London, the result is comic. They keep looking for the grand effect, the inspiring vista, the Cartesian straight line. Instead, what you show them is this little square hidden away in Southwark, this little church concealed in Bermondsey, this friend's wonderful garden in Camden. London's treasures are small, private and battered. Parisians find it either charming or dumbfounding to be in a city which is a network of villages rather than a grand ensemble held together by arterial axes, a city whose pleasures are mostly behind closed doors.

Olsen's book helps one to understand the lineage of this taste for the intimate and private over the public. To take one little example, in London the characteristic meeting-place for middle and upper classes was the gentleman's club, and never the street café or restaurant. In both the café and the club, the stress is on sociable but silent proximity. The paradigmatic club relationship is the nodding acquaintance. Yet the English, Olsen argues, prefer the nodding acquaintance of those of their kind - their class, their profession, their regiment and so on - to the nodding acquaintance of the café stranger.

English adoption of European civic habits has been slow and grudging. It was only after the Second World War that the English middle-classes tentatively adopted the once working-class institution of the pub as an urban rendezvous. If in London the pub is now ceding its place to the wine-bar, café and brasserie of Knightsbridge and Covent Garden, this is a sign of the Europeanizing of an English city, the slow opening up of very un-English forms of conviviality among strangers.

As Olsen makes clear, different traditions of state power make for different capital cities. London's particular geography and its patterns of sociability have to be traced back to British political traditions. A constitutional monarchy tied to a penny-pinching Parliament was not one for grand civic improvement; the landed aristocracy laid out on architecture in the countryside, not in town; the Church had neither the inclination nor the income for civic magnificence; Olsen shows that there were really only two sustained attempts to make London a grand urban stage-set: the first and most important was Nash's Regent Street, linking Regent's Park on the north with the Duke of York's column and St James's Park. From this period date the Burlington Arcade and Trafalgar Square. This brief spell of civic improvement - inaugurated by the Regent's desire to put his stamp on London - began in 1813 and was brought to an end in 1825 by the collapse of the building credit market.

To the 1980s Richard Rogers's plan to link Trafalgar Square, Northumberland Avenue, Charing Cross and Waterloo with a pedestrian precinct and a walkway across the Thames proceeds from the same impulse as Nash's: to draw the disassembled beauties of central London into one integrated pathway for people. But Rogers stands in need of some patron with the power to make it happen: there is no Greater London Council, and Mrs Thatcher has shown scant interest in the city as a work of art.

Olsen's emphasis on the Regency period rather underplays the Victorian achievement: the great railway stations, the Victoria Embankment, the Peabody Dwellings and the rebuilding of London's sewerage. London may have lacked the magnificence of Paris, but it was always better plumbed and lighted. In civic

matters, the English have always preferred decent plumbing to the grand gesture.

The Edwardian period gave London the Mall and the Admiralty Arch as the stage-set for the modern monarchial pageant. Olsen's work might have made more use of David Cannadine's splendid study of the invention of monarchial tradition in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, for it is clear that London, like Paris and Vienna, was reconceived and to some extent rebuilt as a parade route for a new set of rituals of empire.

Olsen celebrates the London that resulted from this history, even the trackless sprawl of Victorian terrace housing, which he argues gave the middle and lower-middle-class Londoner a higher standard of accommodation in terms of space, light and access to parks than any Parisian or Viennese of comparable social standing.

Given his praise for the anti-Cartesian character of London one might have expected him to be unsparing about that grand Cartesian, that great enemy of urban formlessness, Baron Haussmann. One might have expected Olsen to lament the passing of the chaotic and tight little jumbles of streets that Haussmann's



Back gardens in Muswell Hill Place, London N10: a photograph reproduced from the book under review.

grand boulevards smashed to bits. Yet he argues that the still medieval Paris which Haussmann attacked from 1852 to 1870 richly deserved its fate: fetid, unsanitary, impassable to traffic, stinking of urine and alops. Treasures like the Sainte Chapelle were benched with slums. The Haussmann strategy was twofold: *la percée*, piercing through old slum quarters with new arterial boulevards which brought light and ventilation to working-class districts; and *déguignement*, clearing away the obstructions which hid the old monuments and glories of the city.

Hausmann never denied that crowd control after 1848 was one of his motives for cutting up the rebellious proletarian Faubourg St Antoine with the boulevard de Sébastopol. Yet military considerations - clear-sight lines for the cannon of counter-revolution - were a secondary consideration. How, Olsen argues, could counter-revolutionary intentions account for the identical procedure of *déguignement* to the bourgeois sixteenth-century *arrondissement*? Instead, Hausmann's dominant motives were a passion for the straight line, the sanitary impulse and the fierce nineteenth-century desire to be up to date. Olsen successfully shows that Haussmann articulated the vision of his time. Those who disagreed with him did not do so in the name of a contending aesthetic or of a defence of old working-class communities, but in the perennial vernacular of the putrated rate-payer: expense.

In both Paris and Vienna, the economic and aesthetic rationale of urban embellishment was undergirded by a common cultural imperative of statecraft. Both Napoleon III and Franz Joseph wanted their capital cities to express the power of their régimes and their grip on the new impulses of modernity. When, in 1857, Franz Joseph ordered the demolition of the old Viennese fortifications against the Turks and the construction of the Ringstrasse, the dominant motives were to provide an imperial culture with a stage-set on which to strut its self-

importance. Vienna's development had not been constrained by the glories of the fortifications; and the new Ringstrasse was not intended to bring sanitation, light and *déguignement* to workers' quarters. The new buildings which went up along it - the war office, the city marshal's office, the opera-house, the archives, library, town hall, museums and galleries - were to be the backdrop of an opera of self-display by the Austro-Hungarian court aristocracy which had always been (unlike the English or French) essentially urban in its tastes and pleasures. As Olsen puts it, "what Vienna lacked in 1857 was not room for essential and useful functions but room for the pomp and spectacle of its court, the time-wasting rituals of its leisure classes". While agreeing with Carl Schorske that the Ringstrasse reflected the spirit of newly dominant and self-confident liberalism, it was not the trade and industry of the liberal middle classes but monarchy and aristocracy which brought urban modernism to Vienna.

Olsen's consideration of Vienna has to engage with Schorske's magisterial *Fin de Siècle Vienna*, and the subtle differences of emphasis in the two approaches are interesting. Schorske

regrets the passing of this brief synthesis of old and new. He values both the baroque ornamentation of a typical Ringstrasse "rent palace" and the austere formalism of Loos. Yet he points out that Loos's most famous dictum - "ornament is crime" - has, in its triumph in the international style, condemned us all to an aesthetic diet of "boiled potatoes and mineral water".

While the focus of Olsen's account is on the city as public space, he does include some interesting chapters on the differences between English, French and Austrian attitudes towards the domestic interior. Some of these contrasts are well known: the English preference for the detached or semi-detached home and garden versus the French and Austrian taste for flats and apartments. As late as 1911, no more than 3 per cent of dwellings in England and Wales took the form of flats. Less well known are the differences between Parisian and Viennese apartment culture. In the Ringstrasse apartments of the 1870s, the Viennese put the emphasis on magnificence of public stairwells and public vestibules, while the French apartment stairwell to this day is typically austere and even mean, lit only by the gleam of the concierge's beady eye. Yet behind it, Parisian apartments were sumptuous displays of domestic comfort crammed ingeniously into tiny spaces.

The Viennese apartment maximized the display of reception rooms at the expense - mystifying to the English - of space for bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchens. As Schorske points out, when Loos rebelled against Ringstrasse architecture it was not so much in the name of a competing definition of public space, but in the name of a very English insistence on private comfort. Olsen's emphasis on the scrapping of Viennese bedroom space helps one to understand why one of Loos's most famous architectural provocations took the form of a design for a lushly sexual fur-lined bedroom. With rare aesthetic generosity, Olsen is fair both to the modernist provocation and to the old Habsburg preference for appearances instead of comfort. "It is hard in retrospect", he writes, "to reproach the Viennese of past generations for such harmless vanity, considering the pleasure the exuberant domestic façades have given generations of pedestrians, unaware of the internal inadequacies they may conceal."

Modernism *à la* Loos hated façades, hated forms that concealed functions: Olsen's praise for harmless vanity makes one aware how much modernism was an attack on buildings as masks, as public concealment of private life, and how poorly, therefore, it has accommodated the humour of disguise. When post-modernists put egg-cups on the roofs of buildings housing London's breakfast television franchises, they are recovering that baroque and late-nineteenth-century tradition of comedy in architecture.

In his discussion of the domestic interior in the nineteenth-century city, Olsen makes a useful distinction between intimacy and privacy. An architecture of flats that was designed to protect the privacy of the family from the outside world did not at the same time foster family intimacy. In fact, Olsen's study of room plans in nineteenth-century Viennese and Parisian apartments shows the willingness of the bourgeoisie to lose space - in needless corridors, halls and doorways - in order to keep parents separate from children and the family separate from servants. A "family apartment" in Paris and Vienna was a Chinese box of partitions keeping ages, sexes and classes from contaminating each other. Even so, the English middle classes were often appalled by the indiscretion tolerated in a Parisian apartment, where, because of shortage of space, respectable women often used their *chambre à coucher* as their salon. The French, for their part, thought the English taste for domestic intimacy made them *n million égolste*. Looking at the labyrinthine strategies of isolation pursued by nineteenth-century apartment architects, one begins to realize how much the post-1945 open-plan domestic layout reposes less on considerations of light and efficiency and much more on a family ideology which sacrifices parental privacy and quiet for the democracy of children's power.

Just as Olsen reads the geography of the house to inform us about the partitions which

Victorians erected to segregate the household, so he reads the social geography of the neighbourhoods of the city to tell us – startlingly – that each of these nineteenth-century cities was less socially partitioned than the twentieth-century city.

It is precisely because today's middle classes are less able to exploit the working classes that our cities have become more segregated than they were. It was only when the servantless do-it-yourself household became the norm, with the large refrigerator, deep freeze and the family car permitting once a week shopping at a distant supermarket, that the cluster of mews, back courts and mean streets ceased to be the necessary adjunct to any middle-class neighbourhood.

The image of a nineteenth-century London divided between West and East End, Olsen argues, is "totally wrong", since some of the poorest quarters were in the West End, off Drury Lane. Further west still, Belgrave attracted a hidden population of tradesmen, servants, artisans, beggars, prostitutes and criminals. Surely this statement is only true, if at all, before the destruction of the St Giles and Seven Dials rookeries in the 1860s and 1870s? If, at the beginning of the century, London's rich and poor shared the same neighbourhoods of the central city, by the end, the image of a city divided between East and West End was much more than an alarmist myth.

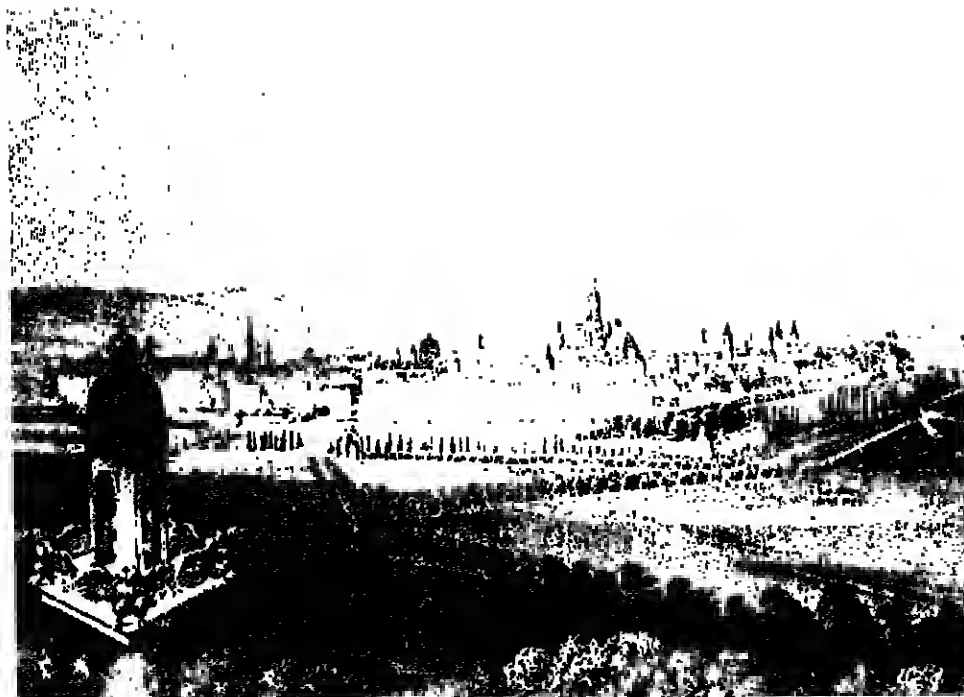
Yet however much one qualifies Olsen's argument, it puts the supposed egalitarianism of modern housing policy in a stark perspective. As he points out, it is the twentieth-century pattern of council estate construction which has eaned the poor away from the rich. It has been social-democratic good intentions as much as the market which has made the central city a middle-class preserve.

In his chapter on the social geography of Paris, Olsen defends Haussmann against the criticism made by Richard Sennett and others that he used his boulevards to break up the social heterogeneity of Paris and to constitute the right-bank *arrondissements* – the eighth, sixteenth and seventeenth – as exclusively

middle-class bastions. Olsen argues that this tendency was under way before Haussmann and that he was merely moving in the direction of market forces.

Richard Cobb and others have lamented the contemporary gentrification of Les Halles and le Marais: Olsen's more benign comment is that neighbourhoods constantly change social composition and that if Paris is becoming steadily more a middle-class, steadily less a working-class town, in old working-class bastions like the twentieth *arrondissement*, its social heterogeneity still persists. Nostalgia for the fate of a city, Olsen implies, is always premature. Cities are the most labile and resilient of human creations: their neighbourhoods live and die – life moves restlessly, formlessly from one section to another.

If there is a persistent weakness in Olsen's approach it is that the urban poor are glimpsed rather than explored. His chapters on working-class housing are thin compared with the richness and detail of his companions between English, French and Viennese bourgeois behaviour in matters of restaurants, cafés and hotels. One has to turn to Dickens and to Mayhew for the London he misses out, or to modern studies of urban working-class housing like Jerry White's *Rothschild Buildings*, as one would have to turn to Louis Chevalier's *Classes laborieuses, classes dangereuses* or Eugène Sue for the Parisian poor kept out of Olsen's city beautiful. And there is nothing in his chapters on the Viennese poor which compares in closely observed detail with, for example, Reinhard Sieder's marvellous essay "Daddy, can I get up?" Child experiences in Viennese working class families". Particularly absent in Olsen's treatment of Vienna is any discussion of the city's social geography in terms of ethnicity. Vienna was the capital city of a multi-cultural empire. One wants to know whether Serbians and Montenegrins, Czechs and Ruthenians, concentrated in discrete districts as Auvergnats or Provençals sometimes did in Paris.



The encircling glass, seen from the Karlskirche, Vienna: a lithograph of 1850 reproduced in the book reviewed here.

A related weakness is Olsen's neglect of the role of Vienna, Paris and London as theatres for popular protest. Recurrently the right of the aristocracy and the middle classes to use the streets for self-display was openly contested, as in the May Day 1890 demonstrations in Vienna, or the tearing down of the Hyde Park railings in London in 1867. If one of Haussmann's motives was to give the middle classes uncontested control of the streets, the result was decidedly ambiguous. His boulevard not only provided clear sight-lines for police cannon: as the recent student demonstrations in Paris attest, they are an incomparable setting for the theatre of protest.

Yet even here, in the weakest area of the book, Olsen's comparative vantage-point allows him to make interesting remarks: as when he says that the debate on urban overcrowding was most intense in the city, London, where the problem was least severe. In Vienna there was even a term, *beigehier*, for the practice of selling space to a single bed to three potential sleepers who occupied it in shifts; yet no middle-class philanthropic discourse emerged to make it a problem demanding action.

The same comparative focus enables Olsen to make the important if obvious point that there was no one nineteenth-century architectural style, but several, and that if the international style of the twentieth century has ended in disillusion, it is in part because it disallowed itself the capacity to use architecture to express the distinctiveness of region, place and locality.

Modernism rebelled against local vernacular in architecture but also, Olsen argues, against the use of architecture as the visual representation of moral and social value. That no twentieth-century architect could think of incorporating figures embodying Art, Commerce, or the twelve branches of industry on his buildings as nineteenth-century ones did, Olsen argues, is a sign of architecture's closure in upon itself. The Ringstrasse buildings expressed a whole culture's views about power, order, war and industry, whereas Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building in New York is about modernism, about architectural form itself. Yet this argument ignores the extent to which modernism is about a version of truthfulness as austere, self-evident transparency. The idea that modernism is more self-referential than nineteenth-century architecture seems weak: if architecture is a language, then, like any language, it is always about itself and about what the society wishes to express about itself.

The City as a Work of Art manages to be much more than a study of three cities in the nineteenth century: it uses architecture, social history and urban geography to highlight the social differences of whole societies in their attitudes towards strangers, family, privacy, space and self-presentation. Olsen concludes his study with some melancholy and slightly erratic thoughts about the modernism of the twentieth century, arguing that the modern civil imagination has lost its way because it has lost respect for history. The soulless high rise of Robinson, the *Defense* in Paris or

UNO City in Vienna, are in Olsen's view "appropriate punishment for a century that has turned its back on history and sought its salvation in the social sciences". History is a messy mode of thought, respectful of the multidimensionality of experience in the happy chaos of the city street; social science crudely systematizes and divides human behaviour by function or location for study and is thus the language of the post-war planners who have done such harm to the chaotic but human framework of the nineteenth-century city.

This song of praise to history is curious for a book which lovingly endorses the nineteenth century's great ventures in urban destruction and renewal – Haussmann's boulevards, Nash's Regent Street and Franz Joseph's building of the Ringstrasse. All embodied an assault on the historical city and all might well have been wrong-headedly resisted in the name of precisely that History which Olsen wishes us to celebrate. Not even the most philistine brutalist of the modern school would dare submit plans of Haussmann's daring to a modern planning committee. And in the best of the post-modernists, Norman Foster, Richard Rogers and James Stirling, there is no shortage of respect for history. Just consider how lovingly Foster sited the proposed BBC building to enhance the view of All Saints, Langbani Place; or how Rogers's Lloyds tower enshrines a homage to Paxton's Crystal Palace. The real lesson of Olsen's book is not that we do not respect History in the city: it is that for good reasons and some bad ones, the planning procedures of a democracy nuke the renitization of architectural vision on a vast scale intensely difficult. It is not that there is any shortage of great visions of how the future city could be; it is that there is no way, in the politics of modern local and central government, for anyone to play baron Haussmann. Democracies make bad patrons.

London in the Age of Shakespeare: An anthology, edited by Lawrence Manley (372pp, Croom Helm, £22.50, 0 7099 3560 9), covering the period from 1485 to 1660, is an attempt to collate the flavour of the city, its life as well as its appearance. The sources used are largely popular writings – sermons, jestbooks, ballads, poems and plays – and many of them are from previously unpublished documents. As well as a general introduction to the life and literature of Tudor-Stuart London, each section has a short account of the particular genre and its historical background. One section "Fishwives and Others", examines the literary fashion for "characters" during the early Stuart period, providing examples of pen-portraits from writers such as Dekker and Overbury of such metropolitan types as "A Drunken Dutchman Resident in England", "A Mere Gull Citizen" and "Scavengers and Goldfinders". *Paris Griffs* by Joerg Huber (70pp, Thames and Hudson, Paperback, £4.50, 0 500 27440 1) also aims to evoke the life of the city by collecting examples of the stencilled images and signs as examples of a distinctly Parisian style. The book is illustrated with over fifty colour photographs.

Giant steps for mankind

Brian Pippard

CHRISTIA JUNGNIKEL and RUSSELL MCCORMACH
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University of Chicago Press

This is a majestic study of a most important epoch of intellectual history, in which the concept of scientific research found its present institutional form. Coincidentally, physics developed in depth and breadth of understanding, as is perfectly summarized by the title and by the names in the subtitle – Ohm at the start, whose law we are inclined to think, as we teach it at O level, could have been anybody's invention, and at the other end the incomparable Einstein, whose insight and exquisite precision strain the powers even of specialists. A practising physicist has much to learn from Ohm's struggle with mathematics in "a new field of physics, from which it had hitherto remained almost totally excluded". And indeed, throughout the two volumes there is an abundance of revealing technical detail that cannot fail to enlighten the specialist from whose training the blind alleys of historical development have deliberately been omitted. To have read Russell McCormach's novel *Night Thoughts of a Classical Physicist* is to be prepared for insights into the sufferings of the unfortunates whose success failed to match their hopes; and the present work similarly enlarges our sympathy (or perhaps our envy) for those toilers now only remembered in a disregarded footnote, without whose errors and modest achievements the great steps forward might never have been taken.

The action is set in Germany, and opens in the early years of the last century, when the French mathematicians were reaching the end of what they could do to perfect the system that Newton had inaugurated, and the British had almost entirely neglected. We had, to be sure, our own heroes striking out in other directions, Hamilton, Faraday, Joule, Maxwell and Thomson (Kelvin), but in sheer numbers allied to prodigious talent the Germans, by the middle of the century, dominated the scene. Other nations profited belatedly from what they saw happening, but it was only after a lapse of some decades that their universities began to develop in similar directions. One reads of the professors' lectures and demonstrations in Göttingen and elsewhere in the 1820s; and how they had access to limited apparatus for their own researches, which they jealously guarded from the depredations of their assistants. It might almost be an account of the recently elected first Cavendish professor in the 1870s (except that Maxwell was devoid of jealousy) and compares rather favourably with what one has heard of other English laboratories at that time.

As the years went by, increased material support for research, acceptance of the need for professors to have more time to spare from their teaching, and the creation of paid research posts established a pattern that we now recognize as the mark of a modern university. It was no more a walk-over for the progressive scientists in Germany than anywhere else, but a gradual erosion of mistrust and indifference, not to mention naked hostility to the replacement of the good old fortifying classical curriculum by new-fangled, and philosophically sterile concepts. The names of many of the pioneers are remembered by physicists for their scientific achievements; they perhaps deserve even more to be honoured for bringing into being, for the whole world, a new ideal of education and a community of scholars which, at its best, has never been rivalled.

The institutional and administrative aspects of this history are very fully chronicled by the authors and frequently make rather solid reading. In the hands of less skilful writers they could easily have become intolerable, but not so here: coming innocent to the task, I found

myself actually enjoying the story for the fresh light it threw on what I had previously picked up only from more narrowly focused and scuttler accounts. Students in my day used to meet references to a mysterious Pogg. Ann.; Poggendorf and his *Annalen* at last are brought into the open and justly acclaimed for the enormous influence they wielded in appraising and spreading new knowledge to the scientific community. And he was but one of the teachers and disseminators working alongside the researchers and administrators to create a new concept of science, which we take for granted but which was then far from being an established doctrine.

Then, as now, there were pseudo-sciences but, in contrast to most modern lunacies, those of the older period were the vagaries of such powerful intellects as Goethe and Hegel. It was hard to decide where to draw the line between speculation and fantasy, especially as the Newtonian doctrine of universal gravitation was profoundly unsatisfying to a severe philosopher. A choice had to be made, it seemed, between action-at-a-distance – the unmediated influence of one body on another through the void – and the postulate of an all-pervading ether which could transmit forces but through which bodies could move without hindrance. Both seemed incredible, and the only safe course was to recite the mathematical creed and stop worrying about what it meant; but to the troubled majority the mystical-romantic excesses of the nature philosophers were a temptation.

It must not be thought that these problems vanished with the ousting of the romantics. Helmholtz's discovery of persistent vortices in frictionless fluids pointed towards models of material particles as vortices in the ether; and the ascription to the ether of any additional properties that might be needed to carry electromagnetic influences, including light, through space conferred a familiarity that almost banished philosophical qualms. When the Einsteinian counter-attack annihilated the ether and restored the void to its pristine non-entity, there were few with the stomach for further fight. It was generally agreed that, so far as the cosmos was concerned, safety lay in asking only "how?", never "why?"

In some measure this was a triumph for the positivist view most strongly expounded by Mach – the physicist should strive for "the simplest and most economical abstract expression of facts". Mach himself seems to have accepted the usefulness of makeshifts like the atomic hypothesis as a guide, while looking

forward to their ultimate elimination. Thus the purely phenomenological laws of thermodynamics, and the formal introduction of entropy, were his ideal of the way forward; while Boltzmann's and Planck's interpretation of entropy as an index of atomic disorder, which has proved an enormously fertile conception, he was inclined to dismiss as at best a temporary measure. Alongside Mach, but going further, were Helm and Ostwald, who tried to develop a general theory on the basis of an energy principle, with little reference even to entropy. The conflict between the Machian purists and the atomistic model-builders generated the most intense of the philosophical controversies in Germany during the last years of the nineteenth century; ultimately the atomists emerged as victors, to develop the chain of ideas that led to Planck's quantum and to the achievements of the 1920s. This story is well told, with a wealth of new material.

Yet though Mach may have lost the battle, his views continued to exert an influence on such as Einstein, whose relativity theories are in many ways almost perfect phenomenological statements, unspooled by interpretation in terms of unobservables. And one can see in Heisenberg's matrix mechanics of 1925 an astonishingly successful prescription for correlating observations without explanatory substructure. Yet Heisenberg had the benefit of twenty years of atom-centred research into what was considered the central issue of physics; perhaps, then, he was strictly acting according to the Machian prescription of using models as scaffolding to be ultimately removed. All the same, it is Schrödinger's formulation, with its unobservable probability waves, that has proved far more convenient; to such an extent, indeed, that most physicists talk as though these waves were an objective reality. That, one may be sure, Mach would have deplored.

From the insecure viewpoint of the present, one may surely appreciate the genuine worth of both attitudes – the realist, or materialist view of the practising physicist and the positivist view which the same physicist may adopt outside his laboratory when he finds leisure to contemplate the eternal verities. Without electrons, protons and all the other-ones we have no vocabulary in which to describe the processes that must be developed mathematically to compare with experiment. Yet, forced to invent quarks and gluons, not to mention strings in ten-dimensional space (most of which dimensions are rolled up on themselves like so many old carpets hidden in the attic), we can-

not help wondering whether future progress must wait for a clear-out of the whole ragbag, more radical than Einstein's expulsion of the ether. There is, however, no hint of how this is to be done, especially as any replacement of present concepts will have to explain an enormously more extensive range of phenomena than anything Einstein needed to consider. Nevertheless, if Mach must take a back seat in the laboratory we must not banish him from our dreams.

The tale, as told here, stops in 1925, with theoretical physics poised at its moment of triumph, and with quantum mechanics as the key to open up what must have seemed, to those who understood, a virtually unlimited treasure-house. In a little over 100 years the first notions of scientific research as an institution had grown into the standard by which the quality of a university might be judged. By about 1950 it had come to be accepted that research is more than the privilege of a talented few, it is a duty laid on all university teachers; only acceptance of this principle made it possible to recruit in the two following decades the great numbers needed to staff a rapidly expanding higher education sector. This is no place to enquire in detail whether the relatively novel idea of a university (so different from anything Newman envisaged) as a place where research ranks at least equal to teaching, is anything more than a glorious but temporary episode in the history of Western learning. The threat to its permanence, which is perceived in nearly every country, does not arise simply from the response of Treasury Scrooges to world recession, but is more basically a form of intellectual bankruptcy – there are not enough ideas to support the standard of living which researchers persuade themselves is their right; more precisely, too many projects now cost more than their perceived worth. Governments have vastly enhanced expenditure but cannot be expected to foot an expanding bill indefinitely.

In this predicament it is worse than futile to complain, for the morale of universities is helped neither by anger nor by despair. These books should encourage us to emulate the German scholars whose vision and perseverance raised their universities from a slough to be an inspiration to the civilized world. If we are not to sink back into the mediocrity from which they rose we must face the problems squarely and mould our institutions into new forms that will continue both to give us satisfaction and to enhance society in a way that others besides ourselves will see as worthy of support.

Discussing the Universe

William McCrea

JOHN D. BARROW and FRANK J. TIPLER
The Anthropic Cosmological Principle
706pp, Oxford University Press, £25.
0 19851949 4

The Anthropic Cosmological Principle is a remarkable book and a masterly exposition of what seems bound to become one of the most important developments to have taken place in physical science. That assertion is of a sort that ought rarely to be made in a scientific context, but the appearance of a work of such depth and breadth of thought is itself an exceedingly rare occurrence. Also, I use the description "development" advisedly; for nearly all the ideas here presented with such skill have been under discussion, some for decades, some for centuries. They will go on developing; in due course doubtless the formulations given by John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler will be superseded. But one cannot believe that there will ever be any general retreat from these concepts: after this account fundamental physics can never be the same again.

The development has to do with the evolving view of the role of the scientist – the "observer" – in the formulation of physical theory. Classical physics seldom mentioned him explicitly; relativity physics worries about his circumstances, claiming to make predictions only about what a well-specified observer will actually observe; quantum physics makes a similar claim, but subject to the recognition that the

process of observation is bound to have some unpredictable effect upon the system observed. Anthropic physics takes account of the plain fact that the physical world must be such as to permit the observer's physical existence as an intelligent being.

Roughly speaking, classical physics works satisfactorily on the scale of the everyday experience of the human observer himself. Relativity physics is required when dealing with relative speeds, or with gravitational fields, much greater than those normally encountered in such everyday experience. Quantum physics is needed when dealing with atomic and subatomic phenomena. Anthropic physics as such becomes important in an implicitly or explicitly cosmological context – hence the conjunction of terms in the book's title.

We cannot discuss the Universe at all unless the Universe includes us: that, roughly, is the Anthropic Principle, and the present book is a comprehensive exploration of the implications of that simple assertion.

Much of the interest in the subject arose when astrophysicists noted a number of near-coincidences of pairs of astrophysical quantities which "happened" to enable crucial processes to proceed in the way they do; had the small difference in size between these quantities been the other way round, such processes would have been impossible, and we should not be here to know it. The authors cite the famous case of Fred Hoyle about 1952 discovering that a particular near-coincidence would be required in order to account for the thermonuclear synthesis in stars of the carbon

needed to supply the material which was itself needed to create life. This led to the discovery in the laboratory of a previously unsuspected property of the carbon nucleus.

Such near-coincidences depend upon the values of the constants of physics, but mostly in a way that is too difficult to track to its source. But we may see what can be learned by starting from these constants. There are basic constants, like the masses of the hydrogen nucleus (proton) and of the electron, light-speed, the gravitation constant, the electron charge, Planck's (quantum) constant and a few others. Certain combinations of these, like the mass-ratio of the proton and electron, are arithmetical numbers that do not depend upon what system of units is used. These numbers are the "fundamental constants" of physics. Nobody yet knows why they have the particular values measured in the laboratory, but far-ranging predictions about the general nature of the physical world can be made simply on the basis of the fact that they do.

Barrow and Tipler explain how everyday properties of matter – its atoms and molecules, its strength, melting-points and so forth – can thus be derived, to a surprisingly good approximation, by quite simple arguments. These arguments may be extended to infer the properties of any planet that can sustain life, and then to predict the maximum possible sizes, speeds, etc., of viable animals. So far as such arguments go, they give information about the best that natural selection can physically achieve, but not about how it does achieve anything. After introducing a number of con-

THE TIMES

Spreading the word

In *The Times* Books Page next Thursday Peter Ackroyd will review *Christianity and the World Religions*, by Hans Küng (right); Victoria Glendinning will review Vladimir Nabokov's lost novel, *The Enchanter*; and Peter Jones will review Sir Ronald Syme's latest book, *The Augustan Aristocracy*



and regularly in *The Times*, Bernard Levin (left) on the way we live now, Peter Ackroyd on books, Suzy Menkes on fashion, Kenneth Fleet on finance, Irving Wardle on the theatre, Frances Gibb on the law, Paul Griffiths on music, Shona Crawford Poole on travel, Clifford Longley on the Church, Philip Howard on words, David Robinson on the cinema... and much more each week

THE TIMES

The world's most famous newspaper (25p)

stants associated with nuclear forces, the authors make similar predictions about the sorts of stars that can arise, and about how they do arise, in an actual galaxy. In particular, it is possible to verify that the Solar System has existed long enough for beings like ourselves to have evolved therein.

If such a thing as our Galaxy exists, physics shows in a general way how we too could come to exist. But how does a galaxy come to exist? This is where Barrow and Tipler have to take us into the domain of modern cosmology. At present most cosmologists accept as a general basis the "hot big-bang" model of the expanding universe, whose overall behaviour is a prediction of Einstein's general relativity theory. But its contents have to be the real matter and radiation of real physics.

In addition to the fundamental constants of physics, there are necessarily a number of parameters that serve as initial conditions for the universe. The building-blocks of atomic nuclei

are "baryons" (eg, a proton is a single baryon). In any large region of the universe, sharing in its expansion, the number of baryons is conserved. The universe is pervaded by radiation-quanta (which at our cosmic epoch are of low mean energy), whose number in the given region is also conserved. The ratio between these two numbers is a fundamental constant of our universe. Observation shows that the number of quanta is about a billion times the number of baryons, and this is one of the parameters I have referred to. Its anthropic relevance is that it determines the cosmic epoch at which galaxies can form, and ultimately plays a part in the various numerical coincidences crucial for the evolution of life.

The *Anthropic Cosmological Principle* also contains a profound modern interpretation of quantum measurement, which implies that in some sense the observer generates his universe each time he makes an observation. But if anything like this "many-worlds interpreta-

tion" is accepted, it offers a far more sophisticated anthropic standpoint than that adopted elsewhere in the discussion. However, it seems not greatly to affect the rest of the book.

The authors proceed in fact to discuss the anthropic principle in its bearing on biochemistry, so passing from what physics might allow to exist to what can be expected actually to come into existence. They reach what many readers may regard as the startling conclusion that the Earth is the only place in our Galaxy where intelligent life has evolved. However, they take the view that since we can expect eventually to know how to construct "von Neumann self-reproducing probes", we are bound to do this and thereby colonize the whole Galaxy, and ultimately, it seems, the whole Universe. This would be the manifestation of the authors' own Final Anthropic Principle: "Intelligent information-processing must come into existence in the Universe, and,

once it comes into existence, it will never die out."

Seven hundred pages of concentrated reasoning based on extraordinary erudition – enabling Barrow and Tipler to set their thinking in the context of man's unending flow of speculation – on an acquaintance with the latest thought apparently in all fundamental sciences such as is commonly supposed to have become unattainable, and on fearless independence of judgment, cannot be reviewed in a short space. Such is the scope they achieve, I am driven to think they must be the only people in the Galaxy qualified to review their own book.

I am not sure whether enough is yet known about mind and consciousness to judge the validity of what Barrow and Tipler have to say about intelligence and its propagation. But I would urge every scientist concerned about the significance of his own pursuits to read and ponder upon the insights of this book.

Astronomer as pragmatist

John North

NICHOLAS COPERNICUS
Minor Works
Edited by Paweł Czartoryski
Translation and commentary by Edward Rosen with Erna Hilfstein
380pp. Macmillan for Polish Scientific Publishers, £60.
0 333 14531 3

With this, the third volume of the *Complete Works*, the English-language edition of Copernicus' writings is brought to a close. A fourth volume containing a facsimile of the sources for the third will round off a series that began in 1972 with a facsimile of Copernicus' manuscript of the *De revolutionibus*. The second and principal volume of the set was Jerzy Dobrzycki's edition of that work, translated as *On the Revolutions* by the late Edward Rosen, to whom the present volume is in many ways a memorial. The dedicated work of Erna Hilfstein is here much in evidence, although marked by little more than modest anonymity, and it should be put on record at the outset, for the personality of Rosen often bids to put even that of Copernicus himself in the shade. For more than forty years he was the most passionate of all Copernican scholars, and this, his last will and testament, bears his signature on almost every page.

Copernicus was a versatile man, an astronomer and cathedral canon, a scholar and a medical practitioner, an administrator and a diplomat. Inevitably, the "minor works" are an odd assortment. They begin with his translation from Greek into Latin of the *Letters of Theophrastus Simplicius*, begun, it seems, as an exercise to help Copernicus learn Greek. For all its imperfections, his translation was printed and reprinted. The result is now submitted to the most appallingly minute scrutiny, with the help of the very dictionary he used. Rosen was at his best in philological work, and here he makes an invaluable contribution to the history of the spread of humanism, extending the studies of a number of Polish scholars, not least of whom is the general editor of the volume.

Copernicus' difficulties with the *Letters* were not entirely a matter of Greek scholarship. The translation, dedicated to his uncle the bishop of Warmia, contained many letters concerning questions that may be loosely described as ethical. (They are hardly to be described as filled with Christian piety, though, as Arthur Koestler, for some curious reason, seems to have thought.) These letters offered no greater problems than did the many rustic letters in the collection, letters complaining, for instance, about plagues of mice, hares and caterpillars. There were many others, though, of an erotic sort, stylized literary expressions of passion, often resigned in cynicism, and only occasionally overlaid with the natural morality, as in the case of those deploring abortion, or the triumph of carnal desire over philosophical reason. What his uncle the bishop made of the erotic letters is anyone's guess, but Nicholas

still pondering the hypothesis that it was love that made the world go round. (From one of his letters later in the volume we learn that he was censured for allowing his old housekeeper and her female friend to stay the night in his house.)

The most substantial astronomical pieces in the volume are the *Commentariolus*, a short survey of its author's Sun-centred astronomy, put together perhaps before 1514, and a *Letter*

to the latter. It is not that Rosen failed to give it the attention which his highly original writing merits, this edition of his *Oeuvres complètes* atones for much previous neglect. Superbly produced and illustrated with rapid, vivid drawings by Jackie Poinson, it contains all Philippe's fiction, while the first volume consists of a critical study by David Roe that is probably the best thing to have been written on Philippe. Philippe's contemporaries did not underestimate him. He fascinated André Gide, who devoted a special number of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* to him after his early death in 1909. Valéry Larbaud, who came as he did from the Allier, included a study of him in his *Domaine Français*, while the finest portrait of the man as opposed to the writer is contained in *Sans remords ni rancune*, the memoirs of the painter and designer, Francis Jourdain.

Philippe's originality, argues Roe, is that he was "a man of letters who refused – or was unable – to abandon the values and the worldview he inherited from his working-class background". Philippe wrote novels which reflect the early *NRF* belief that the literary language was a liberation, and which experiment with narrative technique in ways that are of interest to contemporary critics; but he was also determined to be the spokesman of a silenced class. "You divide people up by nationality", he wrote to Barrès, "but I divide them by class."

The weaknesses of his work are apparent. His flirtation with Symbolist poetry and his subsequent choice of an extreme simplicity of manner cause him to strive artfully after naivety and spoil the early chapters of *La Mère et l'enfant*, for example. He is prone to sentimentality and parts of his most famous novel, *Bubu de Montparnasse*, about prostitution in Paris, are maudlin and lachrymose. He died at the age of thirty-five and his novels are best read as youthful experiments. But his merit is that, while showing none of the political awareness that pseudo-Marxists struggle to perceive in populism, he reconstructs the world in the way – or more correctly the ways – that the working class itself perceives it. This is, after all, extremely rare in French culture.

Philippe was born in 1874 at Cérilly, a village near Tronçais forest. His father made wooden shoes and the family was poor although far from destitute. A bright boy, Philippe attended the lycée of Moulins and seemed certain to become that archetypal Third Republic figure, the *boursier* or scholarship student who goes on to the *grandes écoles*, has a successful career and enters the ruling class. Instead, he managed to fail the examination for the École Polytechnique. The reason was simply that, although he was supposed to be concentrating on science, he spent most of his time unravelling the complexities of Symbolism. He duly found himself back in Cérilly with a handful of poems that imitate Mallarmé, and few prospects.

The interpretation he gave to this experience is contained in *La Mère et l'enfant* (1900) which is, despite its title, a book about his schools. The education system – free and soon to be laicized – was the showpiece of Third Republic democracy and according to Philippe the elementary school was truly democratic: "there was a simple, useful knowledge that you learned from the elementary school teachers. They taught it well because they were the sons of peasants."

But when he reaches the lycée the narrator laments its "cold science". While this is superficially a conflict between analysis and discipline, which are the values of the school, and tenderness, which is the mother's prerogative, it is really a matter of class. The lycée remains a bourgeois institution and the few *boursiers* who attend it represent a limited social mobility masquerading as democracy. Even with his *boursier* status the narrator is unable to get a civil service post, which are reserved for families with money and influence. He appeals to a local landowner who is a republican, but it is clear that he does nothing for him, which leads

Born to the people

Patrick McCarthy

CHARLES-LOUIS PHILIPPE
Oeuvres complètes
Five volumes. Moulins: Iponée.
286485055 9

Although Charles-Louis Philippe has never received the attention which his highly original writing merits, this edition of his *Oeuvres complètes* atones for much previous neglect. Superbly produced and illustrated with rapid, vivid drawings by Jackie Poinson, it contains all Philippe's fiction, while the first volume consists of a critical study by David Roe that is probably the best thing to have been written on Philippe. Philippe's contemporaries did not underestimate him. He fascinated André Gide, who devoted a special number of the *Nouvelle Revue Française* to him after his early death in 1909. Valéry Larbaud, who came as he did from the Allier, included a study of him in his *Domaine Français*, while the finest portrait of the man as opposed to the writer is contained in *Sans remords ni rancune*, the memoirs of the painter and designer, Francis Jourdain.

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Philippe to conclude that the basic alliance of the Third Republic between the peasantry and the left-wing bourgeoisie is a sham. Behind the egalitarian myth lies a society divided by wealth. He concludes that "if you are a worker's son you must not rise above your class" and in an act of defiance reaffirms his solidarity with that class.

The narrator's mother in this novel is pleased that in the lycée her son would be "waited on like a bourgeois" and hostility to the segment of the working-class which has been co-opted is a theme of another novel, *Le Père Perdrix* (1902), where the *boursier* returns. Jean now becomes an engineer but, when the workers in his factory go on strike, he supports them and is dismissed. This triggers a conflict with his father, who has adopted middle-class values and cannot understand his son's quest for authenticity. The real dispute has to do with work. The bourgeois, Larbaud, is condemned because he does not work and Philippe writes: "We want to earn our bread and, since bread is life, we want to give all our life for bread." The pronoun "we" draws the reader too into the working class, which finds its authenticity in work. Yet the father's work is a form of alienation since he executes it only so that his son may not have to work, and conversely the only way the factory workers can refuse their alienation is by refusing to give their labour.

The problem cannot be resolved: Perdrix commits suicide in an act of dignity because he can no longer work, while Jean finds a job as a draftsman, which brings him no satisfaction. Critics have attacked the ending of the novel, where Jean fails to arrive at any political understanding of his situation, but such rebukes confuse working-class writing with left-wing commitment. The novel's interest lies in the exposure of the various working-class attitudes towards work and, although Philippe sides with Jean, he does not altogether condemn the father: he too is a voice of his class.

By this time, Philippe had left Cérilly for a job with the Paris municipality, and for the rest of his life he was a white-collar worker who earned a poor living by transcribing the language of bureaucracy. In *Croquis* (1906) this alienated language is contrasted with Croquis's spoken language, which is rich in humour and fantasy, and with that of the artist who also uses language to liberate.

If his town-hall work was monotonous it was not taxing. (Philippe frequently wrote his novels on Villos de Paris stationery.) There is a comic episode in Gide's *Journal*, indeed, where he and Philippe meet after lunch in a café. Philippe persuades Gide to drink a liqueur that gives him a headache and leaves him unable to write. Philippe, of course, does not care: he is heading back to his office.

Roe corrects the notion that Philippe was weak or resigned to failure. He lived in drab hotel rooms, suffered from timidity and was subject to fits of depression. A childhood illness had left one side of his face deformed and he worried that he was short and ugly. Yet he settled into Paris and, although he returned to Cérilly for his summer holidays, he does not romanticize the countryside. His self-confidence increased after the success of *Bubu* (1901), which later appeared in an English translation with a lurid picture of a whore on the cover and a very Christian preface by T. S. Eliot.

Francis Jourdain depicts a Philippe who combined apatency with self-mockery and sentimentality with obscenity. He had a talent for friendship but, however much sympathy he offered his friends, he judged them accurately. Jourdain was shocked at Philippe's frequent visits to brothels, not merely because of the uninhibited pleasure he took in them but because he showed there the cold self-confidence of a man who expected value for his money. A whore was a whore and should be a good one, he felt; there was no question here of proletarian solidarity.

Philippe's friends took on the title of the "Carnet group", from the village outside Paris where they rented a weekend house. Roe warns against oversimplifying this circle by labelling them as bohemians. The poet Léon-Paul Fargue might be considered a bohemian but Jourdain was a husband and father, and most of them were too poor to see in bohe-

mianism more than deprivation. Jules Lehl went on to a career as a magistrate but Marguerite Audoux had grown up in an orphanage and been a shepherdess, a past she was to describe in her very successful novel, *Marie-Claire*. None of them had any experience of work in factories and to Philippe "le peuple" meant peasants, artisans, seamstresses and clerks; beneath them but all too close was the underworld of prostitutes, pimps and criminals.

Nor should the group be considered left-wing. Philippe flirted with anarchism but Jourdain, who became a Communist militant, denies that Philippe was either an anarchist or a socialist. He simply rejected the bourgeois order that had emerged from the Revolution and was enshrined in the Third Republic.

The Carnet circle might then be described as populist: rooted in or interested in working-class life, it fostered a literature where sensibility was important and which blended realism with fantasy. Less sophisticated than Gide's immediate circle, it attracted him for that reason. Gide was attentive to what could elastically be called popular and was suspicious of the Parisian upper classes: his liking for Philippe was the counterpart to his suspicion of Proust and to his doubts about the role of the Jockey Club in *Un Côté de chez Swann*. After Philippe's death he befriended Marguerite Audoux, who was also friendly with Alain-Fournier, and the depiction of the peasantry in *Le Grand Meaulnes* owes something to her and indirectly to Philippe.

But in itself populism could not account for the fascination Gide felt, which he explains in his *Journal* by the suggestion that Philippe possessed "something that surprises and disturbs". The comment is amplified by Jourdain, who describes how Philippe revelled in his inconsistencies, which meant writing about the working class without the spurious objectivity that marked the Naturalist novel. By shifting his narrative stance he did more than draw the reader into the working class; he demonstrated that "reality" itself is in fact class-based.

This is the innovation of *Bubu*, which presents itself as a novel of low-life or as a dialogue between the pimp Bubu, who incarnates Nietzschean force, and Pierre, who has a Dostoevskian vision of pity. By such techniques Philippe undermines the key Naturalist claim that the events depicted in the novel could not have unfolded in any other manner. On the contrary, a world-view is shown to be linked with a particular social situation and both could have been different.

This is the liberation that he offers in his last novel, *Croquis*. The opening passage depicts an office window and the objects to be seen both within and without. People on the street, which is the domain of freedom, perceive these quite differently from the clerks imprisoned inside, and some of the novel's main characters come to understand that what you see depends on where you stand. A *croquis*, a seamstress, incarnates the resignation of the working class, for she toils sixteen hours a day believing such a life to be natural; when she is paid she sees no connection between work and money but considers her wages as a gift from providence. Not surprisingly, the growth of her awareness of her situation leads her to suicide, while confirming her admirer, Claude, in his view that things cannot be otherwise.

Croquis himself rebels, although not in political terms but with his body; indeed, the best pages of the novel are written in a language of lyrical materialism. He becomes aware of his legs because there is no room to walk in the office and of his stomach when he inherits money and can eat his fill, and the exuberance of Philippe's language shows how different the world becomes once Croquis's place in society changes.

His rebellion collapses, though, because Philippe believed, correctly, that the Third Republic was incapable of radical change. The novel puzzled his admirers and did not, as he hoped, bring him the Prix Goncourt. In 1909 he had an attack of typhoid, which turned into meningitis and killed him. His funeral took place at Cérilly and on his grave stands a bust by Antoine Bourdelle. Philippe has always had admirers in the Allier and now that they – along with David Roe – have produced these excellent *Oeuvres complètes* there is less excuse than ever for our neglecting him.

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EUROSPAN

University Press Group
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I. M. WALKER (Editor)
Elgar Allan Poe: The critical heritage
419pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul, £25.
0711098553

The publishing history is brought out, with exemplary clarity, by I. M. Walker in his introduction to *Edgar Allan Poe: The critical heritage*. Of the quality of the contemporary literary pronouncement there is rather less to say.

High-mindedness under threat

IRVING HOWE
**The American Newness: Culture and politics in
the age of Emerson**
99pp. Harvard University Press. £10.50.
0674 026403

In the earlier book he admitted to a sense of uneasiness about the barriers of taste that separated him, and most of the other New York intellectuals at *Partisan Review*, from the active tradition of American literature. Fully conscious of Emerson's looming spirit, they none the less found it impossible to come to terms with what appeared to be a lack in him of those "historical entanglements" so prominent in the writers they most admired: the great

The Peter Reading Poem

Rumpety- tũmĩtĩ- tũm || tĩtĩtũm, tĩtĩtũm; ukũtĩle
 Rumpety- tũm, bāngĩg || dogs || rumpety- tũm tũtĩ- tũm.
 Bāshĩg the | badgers ābũtũ || tĩtĩ- tũm āũ the | rapists āũ | yōbbōs
 Rũmĩtĩ | tũm tũtĩ- tũm || gangs of unspēakābĩ | yōb̃s.
 Tēnāgĩr̃s rũm tũm || tũtĩtũm- tĩtĩ | head- bāshĩg | bābĩe
 Tũm- tĩtĩ- . ũm tũtĩ- ũm || hōmĩnōĩds, | ālĩēns, | oĩcks.

GAVIN EWART



Such was the English-speaking consensus. Outside France, that is. It was invariably coloured by that "Memoir" in the collected *Works*. Even James Russell Lowell collaborated by cautiously revising his remarkable essay of 1845, at Griswold's request, for the posthumous edition. Cut by about a third, much of the essay's earlier enthusiasm for Poe

Yet, even so, that "*pedagogue rampant*," as Baudelaire called Griswold, never had it all his own way. Other voices continued to be heard. Among them that of C. Chauncey Burr, editor of the *Nineteenth Century*, whose "The Character of Edgar Allan Poe" (1852) is quoted by Walker, but not reproduced at length. Though his is a standpoint from which modern criticism can well begin:

Poe was undoubtedly the greatest *artist* among modern authors; and it is his consummate skill as an artist, that has led to these mistakes about the properties of his own heart. That perfection of horror that abounds in his writings, has been unjustly attributed to some moral defect in the man. But I perceive not why the competent critic should fall into this error. . . . *He wrote as an artist* . . . He probed the general psychological law, in its subtle windings through the mystic chambers of our being, as it was never probed before, until he stood in the very abyss of its centre, the sole master of its effects.

the 1850s.

One such instance is where he is accounting for Emerson's failure to maintain his vision of the morally sublime "central man" in the years leading up to the Civil War. His passage on the vulgarization of democratic politics sheds as much light on twentieth-century cultural fragmentation as on the premature demise of the first American renaissance. He shows how Emerson's reactions to the development of politics as mass culture led him into a republicanism elitism — a claim to represent a higher national value as against sectional or class interests. It is, Howe wryly concludes — with one eye on the very recent past — "a strategy of high-minded Americans often masking conservative inclinations with a mask of rectitude".

Significantly, then, it is through the failure of the Emersonian project, and the way this is mirrored in the writings of his nineteenth-century successors, that Howe comes to a fuller appreciation of Emerson's greatness. After dealing with contemporary disciplines and critics, he devotes the last part of his book to a brief reinterpretation of Twain, Cooper, Hawthorne and Melville.

The unprecedented changes brought about after the Civil War by rapid industrialization and urbanization made the Gilded Age an impossible habitat for the kind of new man Emerson dreamed of. And though Whitman attempted to keep the hope alive in an age of mass production and mass culture, the dominant mood was one of loss and mourning as the "newness" became a subject for reminiscence and nostalgia. Even before the war, though, such an ideal maintained at best a very precarious existence. Constantly being put under pressure from the past, as in Hawthorne's fiction, or from the future, as in Fenimore Cooper's "urgent figure" of Emerson's consciousness always risked sublime dissolution.

Yet, the dream of an American newness does persist, and Irving Howe ends his book by publicly announcing his own continuing belief in the possibility — "a difficult mixture of social liberalism and a reaffirmed and critical sense of self." The bitter years and sense of loss have taken their toll; no doubt, but the patriarch's voice is still just audible in the New World.

The apostle of preparedness

LARRY T. BLANCH (Editor)
The Papers of George Catlett Marshall
Volume Two: We Cannot Delay, July 1, 1939–
December 6, 1941
 746pp. Johns Hopkins University Press.
 £28.50.
 0801825539

Nowadays it is hard to remember how profoundly unilitary the American people used to be. Ever since colonial times they had believed, not merely that a standing army was unnecessary (since the country was protected against all enemies by two broad oceans), but also that it was dangerous to civil liberties and republican institutions. Armies corrupted innocent American youths; wars were caused by sinister influences, probably in league with the British. Should a war come about it could successfully be fought by a million untrained volunteers, springing to the defence of America from the plough and the counting-house. These beliefs were always nonsense, and wear a picturesque and comic aspect today; but in their time they were extremely powerful and nearly brought the United States, and the free world, to destruction.

As late as 1941, all too many Americans still thought along the old lines. That they were successfully outmaneuvered was the resounding achievement of Franklin Roosevelt and a handful of his advisers, among whom General George Marshall, the Army Chief of Staff and later Secretary of State and architect of the Marshall Plan, was the most important. Marshall's career in the Second World War and the Cold War was to be one of the utmost distinction; but it is probably his work before Pearl Harbor that most clearly substantiates his claim to be considered a great man. The story of that work is the theme of this, the welcome second volume of his *Papers*. It was worth waiting four years for.

The problem for modern biographers (and as was said when the *TLS* reviewed Volume One of the Marshall Papers [June 25, 1982] this enterprise is essentially one of documentary biography) is the overwhelming mass of paper they have to read, digest and present, selectively, to their readers. Of these processes selection is the most difficult; it has forced some unpleasant choices on Larry Bland and his team. They have stated their purposes unambiguously:

The Marshall papers project is intended to provide a cohesive, intelligible story of Marshall in his own words, not to provide a detailed discussion of every facet of the general's life or to examine numerous questions not mentioned in Marshall documents.

They have succeeded splendidly, as they did in Volume One. Almost every document the book includes is fascinating in itself, largely because of the vigour of Marshall's mind and his eye for detail. But the difficulties of their task have nevertheless pressed hard on the editors. To produce a readable volume they have had to exclude (for instance) all Marshall's testimony before Congressional committees, and the vast bulk of paper sent out by the Chief of Staff's office, much of which was signed by Marshall as a mere formality. They have felt obliged to exclude all staff-written documents, however important, unless Marshall revised them so heavily as to make them his. So the reader who might reasonably expect to find here Marshall's 1941 report on the state of the army's document famous in its day, and still of value to historians – will be disappointed: Here (except for quotations in the notes) are only documents which bring the man himself to life, and throw light on his ideas, his actions and his innumerable problems, and which he wrote (or at least dictated) himself. Letters to subordinate memoranda to his superiors and colleagues, a few family papers, some public addresses: such make up the collection.

The general effect is vivid and instructive and the editors may well feel that their excisions are wholly justified by the result; but gaps appear which seriously impair the completeness of the picture. For example, the latest document included, a letter to Maraball's stepdaughter, is dated December 6, 1941. Next day the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. It was the grimest moment in Marshall's career, the moment when he had to stare failure in the

face, failure on a colossal scale. Prior to this, as the months go by and the pages turn the reader grows more and more conscious of the approaching calamity, but Marshall in his *Papers* seems curiously unaware of it. The Pearl Harbor base is almost never mentioned, and even the Philippines seem less of a pre-occupation in November than they were in October. But the impression given is wrong. Marshall was in fact achingly aware that war was at hand and that, in spite of all his efforts, the United States was not adequately prepared for it. He was ceaselessly concerned with the Philippines, where he thought the first Japanese attack would fall, but he and the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Stark, knew that the enemy might launch a surprise attack almost anywhere, and they sent warnings to their subordinates at all America's Pacific stations. These points can easily be



American troops greeting their Russian counterparts on a broken bridge over the Elbe at Torgau in April 1945: a photograph reproduced from Moments in Time: 50 years of Associated Press news photos (224pp. Angus and Robertson, £9.95, 0 207 14980 1).

documented, but not, as it happens, from this book. The reader would be well advised to have Forrest Pogue's biography of Marshall constantly at his elbow.

Yet *We Cannot Delay* is still worth reading. Omissions and silences turn out to matter a great deal less than the positive value of the inclusions. Here is an enthralling study of how America was equipped for battle. It has currency as well as historical significance, for history does indeed repeat itself as farce, and the struggle of President Roosevelt to get the United States to come to grips with the Axis powers makes ironical reading at a time when President Reagan is trying to persuade it to take what he sees as the threat of the Sandinistas of Nicaragua equally seriously.

The British fondly recall that in the summer of 1940 they stood alone. But America did so, too. In Washington they hoped that Britain would successfully resist a German invasion. If she did not, then the United States would face a world in which the balance of power had tipped suddenly against it and in favour of some deadly foes. And the country's foreign policy, as in so many earlier crises, in a deplorable condition of "unpreparedness" (Marshall's word). It was more than doubtful if even the integrity of the Western Hemisphere could be guaranteed against Nazi force and guile. No wonder that Marshall went to work with near desperate urgency.

To start with his problem was Congressional parsimony. It is astonishing but true that as late as April 1940 the House of Representatives voted to cut 10 per cent from the army appropriations bill. *Blitzkrieg* in western Europe put a stop to such folly, and the public mood, led by the President with his demand for 50,000 planes, swung to an opposite pitch of wild enthusiasm—or panic. America suddenly wanted a first-rate, fully equipped and completely trained mass army, and wanted it overnight. As this turned out to be impossible, and the long slog of training and preparedness proved to be decidedly tedious, a tendency arose ruthlessly exploited by the isolationists, to deny that there was a crisis any longer, whatever the President or the Chief of Staff said. The newsreel images of Roosevelt and Marshall were hooded in army uniforms. Paarl Ha-

bor at least saved Marshall from the appalling possibility that he might be forced to start running down the army that he had so assiduously built up.

Before Pearl Harbor the army had repeatedly been rescued by Adolf Hitler, who gave the Americans a good finding whenever they needed it; but it would be grossly unfair to Marshall to suggest that he was no more than the plaything of events. He made two supreme contributions. First, he had a clear, considered, fully informed view of what was necessary. Again and again he made the point that America entered the First World War almost pathetically unready, so that her army had to get its training, like its equipment, in Europe, the armies of Britain and France shielding it until it was up to the fight. This state of affairs could not be allowed to recur, though Marshall knew it was almost traditional: in one of his

integrity that no one could wage what he called "the most important battle" with Congress so well as he. The editors print the letter from Henry Morgenthau to Roosevelt in which he recommends that General Marshall, and only General Marshall, be sent to testify before Congress in favour of a military appropriations bill in May 1940. It remains a stunning tribute to the impression that Marshall made, and it was as well for his country that he could do so. Many of the Congressional Republicans were stout patriots, or supposed they were; but their blind hatred of Roosevelt meant that they were all too often ready to vote down any measures he proposed, even if they were desperately needed on military grounds (in 1939 the US Regular Army was only 165,000 strong). Isolationists in both parties were bitterly determined to stop, if they could, both military aid to Britain and a rearmament programme which they believed was designed to involve America in another needless war. The Axis threat did not impress them. So it was just as well that George C. Marshall was there to carry the bill through as, in the end, he always did.

Because of the pinn of the *Papers* this great political drama mostly happens offstage, but Marshall's diplomacy can easily be sampled in the letters printed here that he wrote to members of Congress and other influential figures such as Bernard Baruch. The editors quote amply from his Congressional testimony in their notes. The traits in Marshall which won him so much devotion from rising officers like Omar Bradley and Dwight Eisenhower are displayed, partly in the unflinching professionalism of everything he wrote, and partly in such performances as the letter to General Magruder telling him not to work too hard:

Please take me seriously. You have wonderful qualities, but you are too conscientious. I will be delighted to find that you have decided to take leave and do a little travelling . . . and I would be even more pleased if I had to write you later on and tell you that you were absenting yourself too frequently from your duties (August 7, 1939).

most interesting speeches, to the American Historical Association (it ought to be required reading for those statesmen who do not see the value of a liberal education), be remarked that it would be a good idea if young Americans in school learnt less about their country's victories in war and more about the absurd wastefulness with which those victories had been achieved – half a million men were mustered for the War of 1812, for example, to defeat an enemy who never numbered more than 16,000 at any one place. Another recurring theme was that a democracy cannot organize itself so single-mindedly, so professionally, as a dictatorship; yet organize it must. Marshall never let any of the obstacles he understood so well daunt him. He laboured tirelessly to get the money, the materials, the men and the training that were essential if America were to survive the Nazi challenge. Yet he did not let the increasing danger jolt him out of his well-laid plans into sudden improvisation: he insisted on proceeding methodically. His greatest difficulty was the shortage of time, and he eventually tried to do something about that. As late as November 1941, he hoped that the diplomats could spin out negotiations with the Japanese for a month or two longer. He could put those months to excellent use.

He had never lost sight of the fact that in the end the army and the air force would have to fight. Somehow the masses of the most civilian nation in the world would have to be rendered capable of tackling the Wehrmacht and the armies of Imperial Japan. It was a task to which he was perfectly suited: he was an incomparable trainer of men, as Volume One of the *Papers* amply demonstrates, and in Volume Two he can still occasionally be seen at such work (the happiest photograph: in the book shows him 'chatting to some enlisted men'). Certainly the US Army could not have developed nearly so well as it did without such a man at its head. By the winter of 1941 it was at least as much Marshall's army as the British Army in 1916 was Kitchener's. But Marshall's second irreplaceable contribution was not his training skill but his negotiating ability (which would one day make him Secretary of State). Such were his command of the issues, his courtesy, his patience, his good judgment and his

Yet Marshall was not perfect in all things, and indeed he was weakest where he was strongest. On November 3, 1941, he burst out against the War Department, "This is the poorest command post in the Army and we must do something about it, although I do not yet know what we will do." He should have thought of that sooner. Instead, he had allowed himself to be stretched too thin and to be overworked. He did not delegate nearly as much as he knew he should. Somehow the problem of reorganizing the War Department never got top priority. The result was the unprofessional confusion which contributed so much to the Pearl Harbor disaster. Nothing, probably, could have prevented the attack, or the Japanese from attaining substantial surprise; but the fleet and the garrison should have been on a full war footing. Had they been so, the damage would have been much less, the disgrace less shocking. Most of the blame for the sorry reality rightly attaches to the commanders on the spot, who seem to have been deaf to Washington's warnings of their peril; but some of it attaches to Marshall for not noticing that Honolulu as well as San Francisco was half asleep. A careful reading of the *Papers* shows that he had lost sight of some of the essentials of his job as he dissipated his attention among such tasks as soothing the ruffled feelings of elderly officers being eased into retirement or reassuring Congressmen about the rates of venereal disease among conscripts.

The *Papars* also demonstrate that in some respects Marshall, who was prepared to turn the old army upside down in his quest for efficiency, was very much a man of his time and musty profession. He thought that any racial desegregation of the army would be bad for morale, and bitterly complained that the navy was "protected itself" against such threats. He was very dubious about proposals for admitting women to military service. And he resisted the idea of an independent air force with all the conviction and futility of a man who insists on splitting into the wind.

Yet no one can follow him through these years, perhaps the most difficult he ever knew without realizing that he was, beyond question, a great man; and that without him America would have been incapable of fighting, in time, the great enemies of mankind. Even with all his efforts, it was a damned close-run thing.

Where crises converge

Henry Ashby Turner, Jr

HAROLD JAMES
The German Stamp: Politics and economics
1924-1936
469pp. Oxford University Press. £30.
0 198219725

Despite the proliferation of books on every aspect of the fall of the Weimar Republic and the rise to power of Adolf Hitler, the major economic crisis underlying the upheaval that transformed Germany into an outlaw nation has failed to receive the attention it merits. Why did the Great Depression strike Germany so much more heavily than any other country in Europe?

Harold James sets out to remedy this deficiency in an illuminating book which will serve us a seminal work on the subject for some time to come. His judgments are informed by a firm command of economic theory and econometrics. A broadly based knowledge of economic history enables him to place German developments revealingly in an international perspective. A sprightly prose style and an avoidance of jargon combine to make *The German Stamp* refreshingly readable. James ventures well beyond the usual purview of economic history. Borrowing a term from Joseph Schumpeter he characterizes his inquiry as "economic sociology", addressed to the problem of how people came to behave as they did. He seeks to integrate the political sphere with that of the economy. His research was done in some twenty archives in six countries, ranging from East Germany to the United States, and his conclusions rest on a rich, international assortment of cabinet minutes, government memoranda, private correspondence, diaries, and records of business corporations and banks. James's mastery of this evidence, along with his familiarity with the voluminous historical literature, gives his book that sureness of touch and resonance found only in the works of the most thorough and diligent scholars. He portrays a Weimar economy with many serious defects and he sides with those historians who have contended that capital formation was throttled by high levels of taxation, burgeoning levies for welfare-state measures, and politically determined wage increases that outstripped productivity. He argues that the excessive cautiousness of Germany's investment bankers led them to scorn ventures into new, techno-

logically advanced lines of production and to continue pouring funds into older, familiar, but more slowly growing industries such as textiles. Since the bankers dominated the stock exchanges, many industrialists sought venture capital by borrowing - often on short terms - rather than by issuing new stock. This practice introduced a perilous element of volatility into the financial structure.

Although James believes that the effects of the movement to rationalize have been exaggerated, he argues that some industries used



A page from *The Idea* by Frans Masereel, a novel without words, sold in eighty-three woodcuts (Redstone Press. £9.95. 1 870003 05 5). Masereel's anti-war stories first appeared in the 1920s. Another "novel", *Story without Words*, is included in the same volume.

borrowed capital unwisely to expand their plants excessively or to purchase unnecessary new equipment. They thereby created excess capacity and tied themselves to fixed costs in the form of debt service in such a way as to limit their ability to adjust to a decline in demand. (James concludes that cartelization has been overestimated as a cause of rigidity in the price structure, pointing out that most cartels collapsed under the pressure of the depression.) German industry was peculiarly vulnerable to the contraction of the world economy because of its heavy reliance on exports as a means of disposing of its excess production.

A history of wrong turnings

David Blackburn

F. L. CARSTEN
Essays in German History
367pp. Hambledon. £24.
0 907628 67 2
THOMAS NIPPERDEY
Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte
234pp. Munich: C. H. Beck. DM38.
3 406315453

In an age of professional jargon and specialist monographs, these two collections of essays offer something different. Both are distinguished by their clarity: F. L. Carsten writes a spare, uncluttered English in the best tradition of German *émigré* historians, Thomas Nipperdey a German that is deftly pointed and ironic. Both include many pieces intended for lay audiences, and range widely over Germany from the late Middle Ages to the twentieth century, combining social, political and cultural history to good effect. These volumes provide a showcase for two historians who have done much to define the problems, the continuities and the "peculiarities" of German history.

Francis Carsten was born in Berlin in 1911 and came to England in 1939, via the Netherlands. From the late 1940s he taught at London University, where he became Masaryk Professor of Central European History. These essays reflect more than forty years of research in which the common thread was - as he puts it - to try and discover "why German history seemed to take the 'wrong' turning at every decisive point". Professor Carsten's initial field was late medieval and early modern Germany. A series of articles, some reprinted here, led to

a major study on *The Origins of Prussia*. Carsten argued that Prussian absolutism by the eighteenth century rested on an alliance between Hohenzollerns and Junker nobility, the ascendancy of the latter having been achieved at the expense of both the declining towns and the peasantry. His interpretation ruffled the feathers of many conservative German historians, and an antagonistic response also greeted his next work on *Princes and Parliaments in Germany from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*. Against the prevailing German view that the estates had been an obstacle to the necessary process of state-building by the princes, Carsten attributed to them a more important and positive role. *Essays in German History* includes local and general accounts of this problem; while a chapter on the Court Jews examines one of the means by which the German princes circumvented the estates in raising money for their expensive foreign policies. There may be something slightly Whiggish about Carsten's equation of estates and parliaments, but later German historians have reinforced his view about their continuing importance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The economic and social analysis that informed his work has also now achieved a respectability among German historians that it lacked at the time. Like Hans Rosenberg, that other notable *émigré* historian who grappled with the origins of modern Prussia, Carsten's high reputation in Anglo-Saxon scholarship has been followed by recognition in his country of birth.

While Rosenberg later turned to work on the nineteenth century, Carsten moved into the twentieth. The second half of this book indicates his long-standing concern with the First

World War and its revolutionary aftermath in Central Europe, especially with the survival of old élites and their importance for the advent of fascism. Prominent here is the role of the army in Germany, on which Carsten wrote a major study in 1964. There are explicit or implicit comparisons with the course of English history in these essays, as there are in the earlier ones (Carsten refers to the absence of the "Roundhead" spirit in seventeenth-century Germany). This approach can sometimes cause as many problems as it solves. But Carsten does not catechize German history on its failure to be English history with the relentless shown by some modern German writers. He also has some sharp words for the academic Vandalism that flourished in post-war England, when the sins of "the Germans" were effortlessly traced back to Luther and Barbarossa. As the final essay on interpretations of fascism shows, Carsten achieves his effect through an approach that is measured and comparative in the broadest sense.

Nipperdey's book has similar virtues. Professor of Modern History at Munich, he is arguably the most original of the German historians now in their fifties. Many of these essays certainly reinforce that claim. In addition to a couple of lucid pieces on the practice and usefulness of history, his book contains essays of sustained intelligence on subjects that range from "the contemporaneity of the middle ages" to the problems of modern Germany unity and federalism. A number of themes run through the book. One is the central but ambivalent role played by the state in German history; another is the continuing importance of religion, a subject that has too often been left in the Federal Republic to denominational

James examines in new detail much that is familiar, such as the heavy borrowing during the 1920s by Germany's governments - Reich, Länder, and communes - to supplement tax revenues that were inadequate to pay for obligations left from the war, as well as for extravagant public works at the municipal level, and the rapidly expanding welfare state. He contends that the virtual collapse of Germany's credit rating at the end of the decade was primarily indigenous in origin: the product of faulty fiscal policies complicated by inter-cine struggles for tax revenues among the various levels of government. After taking into account all the many mechanisms that figured in the budgetary crunch of late 1929, which left Germany's government credit rating fatally shaken, he concludes that the affair was "precipitated by nothing more serious than the strained state of Schacht's nerves", which led the excitable president of Germany's central bank to cast undue doubt upon the integrity of his country's political leaders in conversations with key foreign bankers.

Although James never expressly endorses the currently controversial view that Chancellor Heinrich Brüning had no choice during the years 1930-2 except to impose a relentless fiscal austerity that worsened economic conditions drastically and fostered the growth of Nazism and Communism, his interpretation puts him very close to that position. While criticizing some policies of the "hunger Chancellor", he does not question the view that Germany had no choice but to strive for a balanced budget in order to preserve what was left of its international credit rating. Proto-Keynesians who advocated "deficit spending" as a way of responding to the crisis were few; they disagreed with one another on many points, and were divided by political hostility. They faced a broad consensus among senior civil servants and leading economists, who agreed that the government could do no more than hasten - through austerity - the bottoming out process that had ended every previous depression.

James's interpretation of the calamitous German slump is basically a fatalistic one. He identifies no measures that could have significantly ameliorated conditions once the decline set in, and he implies that only wise behaviour much earlier on could have made a difference. He sides, however, with those who contend that the depression would have levelled out of itself, probably from the latter part of 1931,

had it not been for the German banking crisis of that summer. As to the causes of that, James disagrees with the prevailing view that foreign withdrawals set off the run. In a persuasive analysis he concludes not only that it was mainly governmental blunders and German capital flight which began the panic but also that some of the great German investment banks were, through their own mismanagement, actually in much worse condition than was suspected at the time.

Throughout the book James displays an admirable awareness of the extent to which economics and politics were intertwined in Weimar Germany. His observations about the perils of the interventionist state, at least in an unstable polity such as the first German republic, have much contemporary relevance. Over and over, he shows how politically shaped misperceptions led individuals and organizations to folly in the economic sphere. Many of the participants in the struggles of the 1920s remained transfixed by "the image of the enemy". The leaders of the great trade unions, for instance, could not, James argues, "believe that this power of high capital - like their own power - was vanishing to be replaced by the power of the street and of the ballot box".

The book is not free of shortcomings. Insufficient importance is accorded to the lingering psychological effects of the German hyperinflation of the early 1920s, particularly on the public's reluctance to place confidence in government loans. It would also have been helpful to know the author's views on the controversial theory that Brüning's overriding aim in relentlessly pursuing his deflationary policy lay in a determination to bring the victorious powers of the First World War to cancel Germany's reparation debt. The organization of the book by topic makes it difficult to convey the mounting tensions of the slump or the nearly unbearable pressures which converging crises sometimes imposed upon decision-makers. The absence of a chronological thread will at some points confuse readers not conversant with the overall course of developments. An analytical conclusion would have helped the reader to pull together the many strands of the book which the author has left only implicitly connected.

These are, however, relatively minor quibbles with a book which makes an admirable contribution towards our understanding of the German catastrophe and, more generally, of the first fatal crisis of the democratic, capitalist welfare state.

ly engaged historians. Both of these provide threads in Nipperdey's general preoccupation (surprising, perhaps, to some of his English readers) with the problems of German "modernisation". He puts this dispute concept to good use, without the excessive present-mindedness betrayed by some writers.

Nipperdey recently published an outstanding history of Germany from 1800 to 1866, and the best of the essays in *Nachdenken über die deutsche Geschichte* are concerned with the nineteenth century. Two in particular show the author's full range. A piece on romantic nationalism displays familiarity with a wide range of national experiences, a strong feeling for the social context of ideas, and a recognition of how the ideas in question could be (and were) associated with democratic, liberal and conservative political currents. A parallel essay shows how proposals to complete Cologne cathedral brought together liberal, nationalist, monarchist and Christian aspirations, and reminds us of Nipperdey's pioneering work on the social history of monuments and statuary.

Mention should be made, finally, of two important essays - on Wilhelmine German society, and on 1933 and continuity in German history - which argue effectively against confining German history to a strait-jacket of interpretation. Nipperdey's conclusions are very different from Carsten's, but his arguments also have qualities so often absent from the quasi-apologist West German historians whose views Carsten challenged in the 1950s and 60s. Thomas Nipperdey's book is that of an outstanding historian; it also testifies to the energy, pluralism, and self-confidence of historical scholarship in the Federal Republic.

Some of the alternatives

John Dunn

ROY HATTERSLEY
Choose Freedom: The future for democratic socialism
265pp. Michael Joseph. £12.95.
0 7181 2483 9
GILES AND LISANNE RADICE
Socialists in the Recession: The search for solidarity
172pp. Macmillan. £25 (paperback, £8.95).
0 333 34884 3
ERICS HEFFER
Labour's Future: Socialist or SDP Mark 2?
159pp. Verso. £18.95 (paperback, £4.95).
0 86091 166 7

Is there any longer either the class base or the moral imperative for socialist politics in Britain or Western Europe? Leading members of the Labour Party have been asking themselves this question with varying degrees of energy and nerve for several decades. Some, of course, have already given their verdict in public by abandoning the party itself. These three books give a fair prospectus of the range of answers now in favour among those who remain. They vary considerably in force and discretion; and none could be accused of erring on the side of profundity. But they approach the question in markedly different ways and paint between them a graphic picture of the party's present difficulties: difficulties which may yet be visited upon the citizenry at large.

Giles and Lissanne Radice's comparative study of the fate of European social democrats in the recession is the most analytical book of the three and Eric Heffer's robustly individual offering by some distance the least. But the key position of Roy Hattersley within the party makes *Choose Freedom* the text of greatest immediate importance. Its main purpose is to dissipate the uncharitable suspicion that Hattersley (and the Labour Party which he and his leader are attempting to reshape) really have no clear political ideas or principles of their own, unlike "the political riffraff who infiltrated the Labour Party in the late sixties and early seventies". Half the book, accordingly, is

taken up with a statement of Hattersley's "Principles", while the opening chapter is roundly entitled "In Praise of Ideology". Pragmatism, he helpfully explains, "is no longer enough". What the party requires, in explicit contrast to the days of Harold Wilson, is "a fundamental change in our attitude towards the Party's ideology". Cunningly, however, the focus of this change is not to be the ideology itself but "the clarity with which it is expressed". "The fear that ideology is an electoral liability stretches right back to the Party's foundation." But since "philosophical clarity" is "now essential to our future success", a judicious measure of it has evidently become indispensable. An injudicious measure, on the other hand, as no doubt epitomized by Mr Heffer, is still firmly to be avoided. Socialism is about freedom, democracy and equality and has no special implications for nuclear defence or collective security: subjects, as Hattersley orrestingly observes, "appropriate only to election manifestos". Once stated clearly enough, the Labour Party's principles would shrink the Alliance back to the political triviality of the Liberal Party of Mr Hattersley's youth, transforming them, in a memorably revealing image which would scarcely pass muster in Brent, into "a party of Siamese pygmies".

The will to philosophical clarity is displayed mainly in the section on "Principles", terrain with which Hattersley is evidently not always overwhelmingly familiar and on which we meet such characters as Fitch, Nozick and Jean Floud "when Principal of Newnham College, Oxford". The principles favour economic equality as a precondition for freedom, along with the prohibition of private education and health provision (because of the vast improvements to public provision which the latter would cause). They also appear to commend equality of income. The section on "Practice" is a little more cautious, "because the state would have to set the new rules and the state is neither popular nor trusted". It clearly bodes ill for the Duke of Westminster, should Labour win an electoral majority; but it shows a prudent degree of respect for "the new individualism which is the product of the new prosperity" and is particularly theologically agile on the painful topic of council house sales. Hattersley

remains keen to "explain" that the poverty of the poor is a product of the riches of the rich; but he is eager to hit on a programme which "both catches the country's enthusiasm for change and allays the fears that change might cause disruption". Even the Duke of Westminster is graciously assured that the degree of equalization of income contemplated will leave him with the wherewithal for an agreeable way of life.

Choose Freedom provides few grounds for expecting extensive disruption to be avoided in the event of a Labour electoral victory. Nor does it suggest that the party at present possesses a very coherent programme even on purely domestic issues. What Hattersley does is to recast the party's ancestral preoccupations with the redistributive politics of welfare in the word-processed idiom of the 1980s. This may be a political service within the ranks of the party; but it suggests poor judgment of the preoccupations of the electorate, faced with the prospect of a third Thatcher term. Not even Mr Heffer doubts that the Labour Party in government has always held markedly different distributive tastes from those of Mrs Thatcher or that it would continue to do so under its present leadership. What is in doubt, though, is whether the party now possesses even domestic policies which could be implemented without rapidly precipitating economic disaster. This is Hattersley's own immediate responsibility and, given its pressing political importance, it is odd that he should choose at this point to publish a book which makes so little attempt to allay these anxieties.

The Radices, by contrast, do their level best to do just this. Their brief volume considers the fate of social democracy in Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Sweden and Spain in the years since 1973. They do not always make use of the more searching studies on the countries which they treat and show little of Hattersley's enthusiasm for the "elansification" of socialist principles. But they do help a careful reader to assess the Labour Party's prospects in office, should it triumph at the polls. On the whole they give good reason for supposing that in the right country and at the right time a powerful social democratic party closely linked to a

possession. In private life he could prove to be the life and soul of the ILP with a talent for songs and comic turns of conference time. His skills as an actor helped to make him, for a time, the most powerful mass orator in British politics. To a degree unusual in the hard, sectarian world of the British left, he inspired devotion close to love from his Scottish and other disciples. Whether he was much more than this, whether he was the genuine prophet of an alternative "lost Left", as recently depicted by David Howell with reference to Connolly, Wheatley, and Maclean, fusing Scottish nationalism and international socialism, translating the harsh dogmas of Marxism into simple, native terms, is, however, very much open to doubt.

It is clear that Maxton was always most at home on the public platform or the street corner soap-box, much less so in the committee room, almost never before the drawing-board. He was a very limited theoretician and, for all his university background, unable to set his thoughts down effectively in written form - or perhaps just too lazy to do so. Shinwell's and Paton's charges that Maxton was intellectually indolent, impatient with detail, perhaps happier in reading popular detective stories than getting to grips with the hard, intellectual problems of the socialist commonwealth, are closer to the mark than Brown suggests. It was Henry Brailsford, Arthur Creech Jones, J. A. Hobson and E. F. Wisa who did the real spadework for "Socialism in our Time" though Maxton was supreme as its propagandist. His strengths and weaknesses lay, too, in his parochialism. The further he ventured from his native Glasgow, the less was his impact. For all his professed internationalism, his knowledge of world affairs was dialectically limited. He had little worthwhile to say about the challenge of fascism in the 1930s and he never seems to have travelled abroad very much. He once de-

scribed socialism as "a home grown article and not an import from foreign lands". The words were highly appropriate for Maxton himself. Above all, Maxton never sought, or relished, power. His only position of executive authority was a brief spell on the Glasgow Education Authority in 1919. He was always minority-minded, and thus out of sympathy with the eclectic broad church of the Labour Party as it evolved after 1918. On these grounds he parted company with one after another of his ILP and Clydeside comrades. In the end, only Campbell Stephen was left in what was virtually a one-man Glaswegian band. Maxton had differed from John Maclean's non-parliamentarism back in 1911 and urged the need for realism and consensus; but the outcome of his own career was scarcely more profitable in the end. His hero was Keir Hardie and one can well see how this charismatic prophet, the symbol of uncorrupted working-class independence, appealed to a free spirit like Maxton. But Hardie's main achievement (admittedly in the pre-1906 years before Maxton entered politics) was the creation of a nationwide coalition of trade unionists, socialists and dissenters of most shades, with "free play between the sections". Hardie's vision of the "labour alliance" was the very antithesis of Maxton's inward-looking strategy. The eventual futility and impotence of the once-great ILP was the result. Hardie and Maxton both gave rise to legends. But whereas Hardie's, to use Red Indian language, was "a legend that walks", still useful for Neil Kinnock and his front-bench spokesmen like Gordon Brown today, Maxton's was just a legend that disintegrated and died.

The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898-1914, by Zara S. Steiner, which was first published in 1969, has now been reissued in paperback (264pp. Ashfield Press, 17 Pemberton Gardens, London N19. \$15. 0 948660 00 7).

Clydeside's prophet

Kenneth O. Morgan

GORDON BROWN
Maxton
336pp. Edinburgh: Mainstream. £12.95.
1 85158 042 5

Almost from the start, Jimmy Maxton was the perfect symbol of the party of protest, seeing socialism as a moral crusade rather than as an instrument of power, relishing the isolation of the wilderness like Ishmael before him. He was twice imprisoned during the First World War, and sacked from his job as a schoolteacher. Returned to Parliament as a leading Clydesider in 1922, he was immediately on incorrigible rebel on the far left, best known for being suspended from the House in 1923 after denouncing the Conservatives *en masse* as "murderers" for denying milk to infants. Throughout the 1920s he led the Independent Labour Party's campaigns against the Labour Party leadership, headed by his old hero, Ramsay MacDonald. His championing of the "living wage" scheme in 1923, along with his other erratic evangelist, A. J. Cook, led to his being carpeted by his own Independent Labour Party, of which he was purportedly chairman. In 1932 he strongly endorsed disaffiliation from the Labour Party: this led to the ILP representation in the House of Commons being cut to five, which further defections reduced to two by 1939. In the Second World War, he was implacably opposed to military action and consistently urged a negotiated peace. He died, relatively young, in 1946, a "beloved rebel" almost universally respected throughout the Commons, from Churchill to Michael Foot, but not much more than a romantic prophet of protest, an endearing survivor, totally removed from any influence upon national or international events.

This fascinating, and in many ways deeply tragic, career is lucidly recounted by Gordon Brown, a product of the distinguished "Edinburgh history school", and now a Scottish Labour MP and front-bench spokesman. He is illuminating on Maxton's relationships with fellow Scots members like Tom Johnston, Emanuel Shinwell, John Wheatley (once depicted as the Scottish Lenin) and George Buchanan, all of whom in different ways migrated to the Labour mainstream, the first three becoming Cabinet ministers. There is also a lively account of the impact of the famous ILP programme, "Socialism in our Time" (1926), an important proposal for restoring purchasing power as a remedy for mass unemployment - though the author goes too far in linking it with later Keynesianism rather than with somewhat antique Edwardian ideas of "underconsumption". (It is significant that that distinguished Edwardian, J. A. Hobson, provided much of the theoretical economic underpinning of the programme.)

Brown is less successful in projecting the ILP against broader patterns of British politics in the 1920s and 30s, while the account of the labyrinthine political and sectarian aspects of Glasgow public life at this time contains a few gaps. It is surprising that more use has not been made of detailed work on this theme by Iain Maclean, Arthur Marwick, and others, which examines the nature of the social appeal of the Protestant schoolteacher Maxton to the proletarian, Irish Catholic voters of Bridgeton. Nevertheless, this is a very useful, well-written book, soundly based on the papers of Maxton himself, John Maclean, Arthur Woodburn and others. It gives us much the fullest picture to date of the life and hard times of this awkward prophet and pioneer of the Scottish left.

Jimmy Maxton emerges from this book as a man of immense human warmth and charm, of unimpeachable courage, sincerity and moral

The plot to save the artists

Lionel Esher

One Sunday in September 1939 the local Member of Parliament, Sir Ralph Glynn, and his wife, Sybil, had some friends to luncheon in their Victorian manor-house at Ardington, under the northern slopes of the Berkshire Downs. My parents came over from Watlington and John and Penelope Betjeman from Uffington. (My father and mother were much involved in the literary world through their long friendship with Desmond MacCarthy, with whom my father had collaborated on the monthly *Life and Letters* from 1928 to 1932.) The talk turned to the First World War and the destruction of the flower of a European generation. Must this happen all over again? Would it not be possible, my father suggested, to put together a secret list of the most promising artists and writers of military age and to ask the Government to steer them, with equal secrecy, into safe war jobs? All agreed that it would be worth a try, and John Betjeman volunteered to invite a small number of trustworthy people to send him names. Thereafter small committees of recognized authorities in each art would be asked to add, subtract and finalize.

Later the same month Betjeman reported: I have collected the lists of promising artists, musicians, writers, archaeologists, sculptors etc for the scheme we mentioned at Lady Glynn's. But since I started I have learned that K. Clark, Sir Hugh Allen, Humbert Wolfe and possibly others are making "comprehensive lists" for what purpose I do not know. Do you think you could find out whether this scheme so much overlaps ours, that it is not worth my while sending out the lists I have, to the big names?

My father immediately wrote to Sir Kenneth Clark at the National Gallery, who replied:

The work I am doing on behalf of artists seems to have been exaggerated. I am nothing more than a member of two committees which the Ministry of Labour has appointed to draw up lists of artists for the Central Register. So far these lists have been concerned with camouflage and propaganda, and a third rough list has been made out of painters who might be used to make a record of the war. This last list is no more than a stop-gap, and if the Government wishes to employ official artists as was done during the last war, it will have to appoint a fresh committee constructed on rather broader lines. This time has not yet arrived and meanwhile the scheme in which you are interested must continue to do its valuable work.

Meanwhile Betjeman had consulted (rather surprisingly) the Secretary of the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers, D. Kilham Roberts, who replied:

I was extremely interested in the letters from Siegfried Sassoon and T. S. Eliot and am grateful to you for sending me the copies of them. I am even more interested in what you tell me about Lord Esher's idea which seems to have about it the germs of a sound scheme, provided it is developed officially and not put through in a hole and corner way by means of private influence exerted on behalf of privately selected individuals. Anything of this kind would queer the pitch for official centralized action by the Society of Authors and make any attempt to secure preferential treatment for writers immediately suspect. If Lord Esher is serious in his interest in the matter and is really anxious to help, probably the best plan would be for him to meet me and discuss the situation with me. Failing a meeting we could probably cover the ground all right in correspondence but I do repeat most emphatically that independent, unofficial action in the matter would in my opinion be absolutely fatal to the cause.

Betjeman comments to my father:

I have had a letter this morning from the Secretary of the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers, I send you a copy of it. If you will be keen on the scheme you envisaged in the garden at Ardington, perhaps you will like to write to him or see him. He does not seem to live far off. Meanwhile I am anxious for your word telling me to go ahead and send off skeleton lists of artists, musicians etc to the big names in each art for them to add to, delete from and approve. I have also written to Clerk, Librarian of the RIBA, for architects, but I have not mentioned your name, I suppose we will write to him from K. Clark and rather false conferences arranged by Paul Nash, how previous we were with your scheme and how now people have started writing to me instead of my having to write to them, at least I have some Whitehall office. That is why you cannot force the use of the typewriter in a personal letter. I ought to add that the Inc Soc of Authors etc has an impressive Council of all the well known and authors like Warwick Deeping, Alfred Noyes and A. A. Milne and a few good ones.

Meanwhile Clark had been asked to give his opinion of the draft list of artists and wrote to my father:

Thank you for your letter and very interesting lists. As we agreed that we must harden our hearts I will say exactly what I feel about the names put forward by the other judges always having in mind that we are considering promise as much as past performance.

Michael Rothenstein - quite unconvincing. Claude Rogers - pretty good and worth adding to the list.

Anthony Devens - a lightweight, but I agree. Richard Ertch - no. Has done a little painting, but essentially static and second-rate.

Marland Lewis - I believe I was one of the first people to buy his work about 10 years ago, since when he has got steadily less and less good, and I see little hope of recovery. Anyway he must be about 40.

Leonard Applebee - have seen too little to say.

Adrian Daintrey - exactly the same as Marland Lewis - but I think less good.

Edward Le Bas - more a connoisseur than a creative artist - but v. ohle pastiche of Pissarro.

Carol Weight - excellent. V. stupid of me to have left him off my list.

Kenneth Martin - what little I have seen has interested me, and appears promising. I would agree.

Of the rest I would agree, with reserve, to: Mervyn Peake, Julian Trevelyan, John Aldridge, John Bantling and perhaps poor Rex [Whistler].

I would be definitely opposed to Robert (sic) Darwin and Albert Rothstein (tho' the latter is a great bit of Rothstein's). Barnett Freedman I admire, and did not include him in my first list because he has already tried to join up and was rejected.

These fifty (sic) young men may be considered to be the pick of the creative artists under forty. They are totally unaware of what is being suggested on their behalf. It is, however, of no use to give you their names unless in your opinion there is some chance that the general principle that they should be used for the safer forms of military service will be accepted by the military authorities. The military loss of employing these men in work that after all has to be done by someone cannot be considered great, while on the other hand it is more than possible that we shall not be forgiven by posterity if we allow them to be sacrificed.

I should be most grateful if you would give this matter your consideration, or I could, if you wish, come and see you about it.

Two weeks later he received the reply:

Thank you for your letter of the 20th February, with regard to the possibility of excluding a limited number of selected writers, artists and musicians from the more dangerous forms of military service.

I have very carefully considered your proposal and agree that from a purely military point of view their withdrawal from active service would not have a serious effect on the war effort of this country. Nor would I desire in any way to belittle the importance of the selected individuals to the culture of this country, but frankly I do feel that the principle of such a form of protection from the dangers of military service is difficult to accept.

The Government policy clearly defined at the outbreak of war and accepted by the country is that all men whose services are not claimed for other work of national importance shall, between the ages of 18 and 41, be liable for service with the fighting forces wherever they may be physically fit to do so. The only exemptions are those arising from conscientious objection to war or from exceptional hardship. To depart from this policy in the way you suggested, whatever view is taken of the objects which you have in mind, would amount to a form of exemption from full military service for a privileged group of persons.

Even if the knowledge of such special treatment could be kept secret, which I very much doubt, and that it could be arranged without arousing the suspicions of those affected, the existence of such exemption would make it almost impossible for us to stop at the exclusion of persons regarded as indispensable to the future culture of this country. The claims for example of science, of the professions, medical and so forth, of scholars of all arts, would be hard to deny as being of great importance to the future welfare of this country.

You raise indeed a question of the relative importance of any particular individual to the good of the State on which many contrary views would be expressed and one which has been debated many times without agreement. In fact it is because of this difference of opinion and because of the unfairness of any departure from the existing principles on which men are called upon to serve their country that I find myself unable to favour the scheme for which you have so eloquently argued, and to which you have clearly given so much time and thought.

My father sooo afterwards wrote to the *Daily Telegraph*, so I think there had been published some correspondence on artists and the war:

The distinguished men and women who signed a letter in your issue of last Saturday on the subject of the artist in war-time are, I am afraid, unlikely to be successful in their appeal. Obviously they desire not to be considered as reserved occupation, but, unfortunately, in the eyes of the Ministry of Labour, the only reason for reserving an occupation is if the war value that it may possess.

For many months I have been working on a scheme for more humble in its objective, merely to save from destruction a very limited number of creative artists of such promise or performance that their loss would be a disaster to the community.

It has always been a matter of regret that no steps of this kind were taken to the last war, since the numbers involved are very small, and the creative imagination very rare.

When I was asked to sponsor the approach to the Secretary of State for War on the subject, I stipulated 1) That the artists themselves should be unaware of what was being done to save them.

2) That there should be no demand to release these men from military service, but only that they should be used for work of comparative safety.

3) That I myself have no hand in their selection, which should be done by competent and distinguished judges.

These stipulations have been adhered to, and after some months of careful work, the results are as follows:

Faber (President and Secretary of PEN). L. A. G. Strong and G. M. Young - all overweight, it might be thought, of writers.

My father took the chair, but minutes, if they were kept, have not survived. It is clear, however, that Nash offered full collaboration and the use of his dossiers of artists. Carter's proposal to include scientists etc was quickly disposed of, and architects were also eliminated for good measure. Musical performers as well as composers were in, but actors and dancers were out. Finally, three authoritative panels were to be invited to sift lists and prepare final proposals. Their eventual members were as follows:

Literature
Rudyard Kipling
George Barker
Ronald Firbank
Ronald Hyatt
Roy Campbell
Arthur C. Marsh
Laurie R. King
Cecil Day Lewis
William Empson
Graham Greene
Leslie Hallward
Christopher Hassall
John Lehmann
Louis MacNeice
Charles Madge
Archibald MacLennan
William Plomer
V. S. Pritchett
Peter Quennell
Stephen Spender
Dylan Thomas
Edward Upward
Rex Warner
Evelyn Waugh
Emily Williams

Music
Benjamin Britten
Lennux Berkeley
Stanley Bate
John Dykes Bower
Eric Chisholm
Clifford Curzon
John Hunt

Art
Sir Kenneth Clark
Professor P. H. Jovett
Professor R. Schwabe
Paul Nash
Clive Bell
East of Sandwich
Sir Edward Marsh
Jack Beddington

Music
Sir Hugh Allen
Malcolm Sargent
Lord Berners

Writers
Walter Leigh
Alvin Rawsthorne
Edmund Rubbin
Cyril Smith
Norman Tucker
Sydney Watson
William Walton

Art
John Aldridge
Leonard Applebee
John Bantling
Edward Bawden
William Bell
Graham Bell
William Coldstream
Anthony Devens
Lawrence Gowing
Lytton Lamb
Rowland Munn
Robert Medley
Kenneth Martin
John Piper
Victor Pasmore
Mervyn Peake
Claude Rogers
Eric Ravilov
Kenneth Rowntree
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COMMENTARY

Beautiful soup

Patrick O'Connor

Alice in Wonderland
Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith

Alice is playing a simple tune on the parlour upright, beneath the looking-glass; she gets up and wanders away – the piano goes on playing the tune. We are in the dream already, before lying down in the grass to await the rabbit; Alice looks sad rather than sleepy – a nightmare quality is set from the beginning of John Wells and Carl Davis's *pasticcio* opera, developed from their version for radio.

Lesley Minville, who nicely conveys the somewhat griggish side of Alice, and thirteen other players, who take some thirty-four parts between them, sing and dance this textually faithful adaptation with a tinsel balance between operatic parody and pantomime. There has never before been a successful musical adaptation of *Alice*. A rash of *Alice* operettas appeared around the turn of the century – five are listed in Franz Steiger's *Opernlexikon*. None of the tunes from the cartoon film by Disney in 1951 – music by Sammy Fain – have caught on, though the White Rabbit's lyrics by Bob Hilliard stick in the mind: "I'm late, I'm

late, for a very important date". (Alice proved a *femme fatale* for Hilliard who succumbed to a heart attack returning from an "Alice in Wonderland Day" at Disneyland in 1971.) The only major composer to have set anything of Alice's adventures to music is Erik Satie: his *Trois Mélodies* include *Le Chapelier*, with its ironic descending scale on the words, "Avec du beurre de première qualité".

There are, I think, only four references to music or song in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Three of them are this version's most imaginative and enjoyable scenes: the Duchess in the kitchen; the Mock Turtle's lament and the ensuing Lobster Quadrille. One of the outstanding successes of the performance is John Davis's Duchess, in a Prokofiev-inspired gopak with John Hall's leather-aproned Cook. Equally satisfying is Harold Innocent's Caterpillar, swathed in brocade elderdresses, who sings with Alice what used to be called a serio-comic duet on "You Are Old Father William". Carl Davis has peppered his soup with a lot of little musical jokes: as the Rabbit flees from Alice, there is a touch of "How Could You Treat A Poor Maiden So?"; the Croquet Party is a Donizetti ensemble, the dramatic soprano Queen (Nualla Willis) complete with woodwind obbligato, confronting Joan Davis's fal-

con Duchess: "Pink the flamingo! Noble the blow!" The conventions of opera are funny when lampooned musically, the old-fashioned *plastique* of opera stars is not.

The staging relies on cinematic techniques, using sequences of spot-lit "freezes" to depict Alice shrinking and growing. Anthony Ward's costumes adapt Tenniel's illustrations, with some very pleasing touches: when the Chestnut Cat disappears, her smile remains – embroidered on an opened parasol. The Mock Turtle (also Harold Innocent) is in a three-wheeled scallop-shaped bath chair, a tureen on his head: "Soup of the Evening", a Schubertian arioso, his duet with the Gryphon a worthy companion piece to the one with Alice. After this the Trial Scene comes as something of an anti-climax, although Marilyn Cutts (who is also a fine Cheshire Cat) as the Guinea Pig and Patrick Clancy as the Knave both make more of their small parts than one expects.

Alice has never been a rib-tickling laugh. To attempt it as a pantomime proper would be a destructive vulgarization: this is just the way to translate it into music theatre. Lacking a Satie or an Offenbach (whose presence is felt in the Caucus race, which becomes a Second Empire gallop), Carl Davis's agreeable Victorianisms are worthy echoes of "Memory's mystic band".

A drop of the soft stuff

Rupert Christiansen

GIAN-CARLO MENOTTI
The Boy Who Grew Too Fast and Amult and the Night Visitors
Sadler's Wells

I am beginning to question the orthodox view that exposure to the art of opera is a civilizing part of every child's education. Recently I witnessed a school's performance of *La traviata* at which my seven-year-old neighbour was so loudly and embarrassingly traumatized by Violetta's inexorable decline and maltreatment that she had to be removed from the auditorium, snubbing in panic-stricken sympathy. Such incitement to emotional self-indulgence is all too common in opera, and hardly makes healthy material for classroom discussion.

The Italian-American composer Gian-Carlo Menotti thinks he has an answer, in the shape of a subgenre, "children's opera", to which he has profigally contributed. But this means only opera for children, not opera in which children might play their own creative part. His ability to hold down the potentially riotous

energies of his audiences is masterful but a holding-down it is, not an opening out. In terms of the quality of experience provided, an episode of *Dynasty* would be comparably stimulating.

The Boy Who Grew Too Fast, here receiving its British première, runs home the good old American moral that we should "Be glad that in his wisdom God decided that you should be you". The plot is no more than a succession of clichés, not very well strung together. Nine-year-old Poponel Skosvodmonit is six feet tall, blushes to admit to his funny name, and wants to be like the other boys. Arriving at a rather old-fashioned school where his fellows are still throwing paper darts and squirting water pistols, he is dragged off by a kindly teacher to the farcical Doctor Schrinck, who puts him into an organic box and temporarily reduces him to normal height and social acceptance. But when a terrorist invades the school and holds them all hostage, it is Poponel, restored to premature gianthood, who bravely overcomes him. This profound fable for our times is vilified by music which has nothing to say at all – not even one good tune, only a meandering arioso, interspersed with a few odd noises for Doctor Schrinck and his cavortings.

But somehow it worked. A cynical youth

behind me, whose initially dominating concern was securing a twenty-pence coin for the opera-glasses slot, announced at curtain-rise, "I thought this would be stupid, and it is"; yet even he soon fell silent, then laughed and finally cheered – at which point criticism can only shrug, accept, and withdraw.

The piece is well staged and nicely performed. There is one moment of pleasure for the grown-ups, when the teacher announces that a certain Andrew Porter (otherwise critic of the *New Yorker* and no great fan of Menotti's) has failed his exams and will be kept down a grade for another year.

Amult and the Night Visitors, written for American television in 1951, is reputed to be the most performed of all twentieth-century operas. Requiring only modest vocal and orchestral resources suitable for school and amateur groups, it tells a Nativity story of truly repellent sentimentality to satisfy a grotesque conception of the Christmas spirit. On this occasion, however, the cracks were beginning to show. Exchanges like "My little son, a beggar! Don't cry, mother dear" met with some refreshingly sceptical guffawing, and the deep sighs that greeted the lame Amult's miraculous throwing-away of his crutch were not altogether sincere.

Still, this was a minority view. The rest of the audience wallowed happily in the slickly sub-Puccinian harmonies, the clever pacing of the action and mood, and the pretty stage picture designed by John Pascoe. Your critic consumed three choc-ices, but found his resistance otherwise unbroken.

Owners of historic houses in Scotland were recently invited by Canongate Publishing to enter a competition for "a tale from the past about their family or house". Fourteen of the entries, with illustrations, make up *Winning Tales from Scottish Houses* (179pp, Edinburgh: Canongate, £9.95, 0 86241 133 5).

Euan Macpherson's prize-winning story, "Four Sons", is an enjoyable, highly-coloured anecdote about a search for the teenage boys of the laird of Glenruth, Invernesshire, lost one bleak winter afternoon in the 1880s while their parents were away at lunch. Going down to his cellar at dawn the next day to replenish the whisky decanter he has spent an anxious night emptying. Lachlan Macpherson finds his sons all asleep on the flagstones, drunk.

Few of the other entries – among them, pieces by the Earl of Cawdor, Bruce Urquhart of Craigston, Flora Fraser and Jean Polwarth – so clearly fit the competition's brief, though the prevailing mixture of romance, family annals, architectural history and details of jointure and dower is rather gives, in the style of a home-made and truly arbitrary guidebook, a glimpse into its world.

The Director as Collector

Richard Cork

Director's Choice
National Gallery

Since his appointment as Director in 1973, Sir Michael Levey has presided over the National Gallery during a period when prices for art soared to unprecedented heights. The loss of Velázquez's superb "Juan de Pareja", exported to New York in 1970 for a colossal sum, might have been the first of many similar departures. But Levey never allowed another painting of prime importance to slip out of the country. The *Director's Choice* exhibition, celebrating the acquisitions of a man on the eve of retirement, is filled with major canvases secured for the nation with seemingly miraculous dexterity.

Some of them, like Altdorfer's "Christ Taking Leave of his Mother", transform the gallery's collection. Early German art has never been represented in great strength at Trafalgar Square, and the Altdorfer is filled with an exalted, almost apocalyptic response to the landscape around the Danube. Others, among them the two graceful Prunigianians and Van Dyck's wonderfully sympathetic group, "The Bobbi Children", add in our understanding of painters already well established in the collection.

No director could be expected to restrict purchasing to artists previously unrepresented in the gallery. Such a policy would have prevented Levey from acquiring some of the greatest images on view here. Among them would single out Rubens's bravura "Samson and Delilah", a youthful display of prowess which also conveys a profound ambiguity in Delilah's blend of treachery and genuine affection. Swaggering virtuosity, however, is by no means the hallmark of all the paintings on display here. Even though Levey clearly delights in the sumptuous aplomb of Drouais and Fragonard, nothing could be quieter than Claude's "The Enchanted Castle", its mood poised delicately between melancholy and wonderment.

As for Degas's haunting portrait of Hélène Rouart, standing wistfully in her father's study where she appears almost trapped by the huge chair and the eerie Egyptian wood statues, it is a painting which makes a virtue of understatement and lack of conventional "finish".

Although the catalogue's bibliography of Levey's writings on art bears witness to his breadth of interests, he is in the end an eighteenth-century devotee. The distinguished quality of his purchases in this period comes as no surprise, but he has refused to concentrate on predictable reputations alone. Alongside the cool gravity of David's "Jacobus Blaauw", a canvas which at last brings the full power of Republican neo-classicism to the collection, less celebrated names stand out. Perronneau's portrait of the Romantic writer Jacques Cazotte is a delightful achievement – refined and yet vigorous, dignified as well as mischievously amused. Luis Meléndez is another unfamiliar figure, but his "Still Life with Oranges and Walnuts" fuses grandeur and sensuous delight with an intensity which recalls both Zurbarán and early Velázquez.

Now that the British rooms have been restored to their original Victorian magnificence, Levey's determination to display our native achievements is fully revealed. His acquisition of the Colman double portrait by Wright of Derby, and above all Stubbs's consummate "Milbanke and Melbourne Families", shows how well he has chosen pictures for these handsome rooms. Only in his innovative forays into the twentieth century does uncertainty appear: the "Portrait of Grete Moser" is a strangely awkward and unappealing Matisse, and the equally unsatisfactory Picasso still-life has not even been included in this exhibition. But I applaud Levey's courage in making the early twentieth century legitimate territory for the National Gallery to explore, and congratulate him on enriching the rest of the collection with an array of images which testifies to his discernment. Fair and heartfelt joys of art.

Standing up for cuckoo-land

E. S. Turner

JOHN WHITING
A Penny for a Song
Barbican Theatre

In 1940, according to Peter Fleming, the English looked on the looming images of invasion "with a morbid relish"; the "lack of complete conviction" is found, conspicuously, in the urbane Hallam, author of *A Critical Inquiry into the Nature of Ecclesiastical Cant*, a gently sardonic observer who seems being asked to run about posting up invasion notices. Two wanderers turn up: a blind, but articulate, ex-soldier on his way to urge the King to end the war, led by a small boy heading for Bethlehem to see Jesus. The soldier is unaware the King is mad, and no one cares to tell the boy that Jesus is dead.

Mad as the monarch, Sir Timothy plots to dress up as Napoleon, and, using a French phrase-book, order the Emperor's expected legions back to France. This involves twice descending a well into a network of tunnels, once in the well bucket and later – a splendid theatrical moment – in the basket of a commandeered balloon. Meanwhile Lamprett extinguishes his brother's beacon fires and his wife, in a golden breastplate, sets off with her maid to join an Amazon corps. It all adds up to a day of midsummer madness, with ardour and berserk enthusiasm deflated by the indifference of routine and a steadfast refusal to goggle. In the intervals between warlike business are dreamy dissertations on man's need to clown to keep his sanity, to accept joy and laughter as reality not illusion, to travel in order to discover the reason for travelling, and so forth; sentiments unlikely to overheat the brain, but acceptable in a cuckoo-land frozen at ten to three, Ealing time.

Howard Davies's production skimps only on food at the picnic. The fine red balloon upstages the little red fire-engine, and a red flare, set off for no very good reason, heightens the air of childlike unreality. Brian Cox and Ian McNeice bustle about as the obsessed Bellboys brothers; Stephen Moore, as the dandy with a manservant to read Wordsworth's foolishness to him, could have handled wittier lines; Mick Ford is the blind man fated to fall in love with the coltish Dorcas (Rudi Davies), who shows a lot of leg for an Austen-period seventeen-year-old; David Bradley, permanently treed, keeps slumber and insubordination at bay. The programme is bafflingly padded out with chunks of garden verse from the anthologies, but has a useful article on the Whiting corpus by Simon Trussler.

Here is the Dorset garden of Sir Timothy Bellboys, who has reluctantly handed over his private army to a commander of Fencibles ("our chaps will deal with them"). Up in a tree his put-upon servant Humpage mans a look-out telescope. Timothy's brother Lamprett, a manicure-freighter since the day he inadvertently set fire to his future wife's breeches, also de-

Fair folk

David Nokes

THOMAS HARDY
After the Fair
BBC1

Hardy's is a peculiarly photogenic brand of pessimism, and Hardy films, by now a recognizable genre, specialize in transforming his simple stubborn ironies into lingering seductive myths of a world we have lost. Descriptions which, on the page, convey satire or sentimentousness, are softened by the designer's loving care and the cameraman's flattering lens into nostalgia. *After the Fair* is a ninety-minute film adapted at two removes from Hardy's short story "On the Western Circuit". De-canted for the festive season it releases a rich aroma of bygone country stores and loamshire goodness. From the country fairground to the fields of corn; from the cathedral close to the traditional brewery with its pair of well-groomed shire-horse drays, every shot is as wholesome as a Hovis ad. Even the snobberies of this vanished world appear more quaint than vicious. "Either she's a servant or she's a not", barks Arthur (Kenneth Hough) at his wife Edith (Hannah Gordon), reproving her indulgences towards their housemaid. But framed in the reflective glow of polished period surfaces his words evoke not criticism but a voyeurist fascination with an era when values were as stiff as collars.

Simple, sensuous and passionate, Hardy's little tale relies on the most conventional of plots: offering a stark contrast of the word and the flesh. Sammi Davis plays the country housemaid Anna seduced by the young London barrister Charles (Martyn Stanbridge).

Hannah Gordon plays the neglected wife whose letters to Charles, ostensibly on Anna's behalf, become increasingly lyrical and intimate as she acts out a fantasy of fulfilment. The success of the film rests on the relationship between these two women and both actresses give outstanding performances. In voice, manner, gesture and accent they are perfectly contrasted. Sammi Davis is breathless, gawky and impulsive, with a Wessex accent as ripe as her budding figure. Hannah Gordon is elegant and sophisticated, yet breathing a distinct note of desire into her formal sentences. Gillian Freeman's script fills out Hardy's story (and Frank Harvey's stage play) with some well-judged and idiomatic dialogue. "A girl can get that hungry she don't always wait for the parson to say grace", is one of Anna's typical remarks.

A particular success is the film's use of folk song. The raucous renderings of bucolic *double entendres* in "The Cuckoo's Nest" and "Every-thing in the Garden's Lovely" nicely convey Hardy's ambivalence towards peasant love, ripe but cruel, unsentimental as nature itself. The look of bewilderment and dismay on Martyn Stanbridge's face as he sees his new bride singing along with her drunken peasant cronies on their wedding day is a perfect image of the townie's disillusionment with the dream of pastoral innocence.

"Finnegans Wake: Contexts", a week-long symposium sponsored by the University of Leeds and Leeds Polytechnic, will be held in Leeds from July 13 to 17. The aim of the symposium is to provoke a reassessment of *Finnegans Wake* in the light of Joycean scholarship of the last fifty years. Further information can be obtained from School of English, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT.



"Park's Twelfth Night Characters", riddle cards for a Victorian party game of the 1840s, from the exhibition Spirit of Christmas: Christmas Revels, which is at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood until January 18.

A brand new wife

Grevel Lindop

WILLIAM WYCHERLEY
The Country Wife
Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester

"Pshaw," drawls Sparkish. "I would no more miss seeing a new play the first day than I would miss sitting in the wite's row." Theatrical self-consciousness, in every sense, is the keynote of Restoration comedy, and a quality few productions adequately embody. But even Sparkish and his cronies – given to "standing on a bench in the pit" and claiming attention as "the poet's rivals in his audience" – would have been left gaping by this *Country Wife*: almost a "new play" in itself, so thoroughly have Nicholas Hytner's direction and Mark Thompson's designs shattered and renewed the conventions of "Restoration" staging.

Thompson has developed an entirely new design idiom: neither "period" nor "modern" but lavish, grotesque and monstrously stylish, the fawnsomeness dragging enormous peacock-tail trains of coloured satin and armoured with bodices so stiff they seem to move independently of the bare arms and shoulders behind them; the men in a variety of contrasted styles – the numbskull "wit" Sparkish in ludicrously tight-waisted, long-skirted coats, a minuscule coronet perched foppishly on top of his head; the quack-doctor punkish in silver brocade and bondage-tight black leather; the rakish Dorland in culottes, razor-cut hair and gigantic earring; add by contrast Pinchwife, the jealous husband, in layers of coarse and shapeless brown wool, exuding stinginess and musty rural retirement. Only Mrs Pinchwife – the "country wife" herself – in a subdued print dress with many petticoats, and Horner, the problematic hero, in black satin breeches, come close to conventional period costume.

Gary Oldman's Horner is an obsessed, Faustian figure, his stratagem of gaining access to the town wives by posing as a eunuch – victim of "an English-French" surgeon's "drastic treatment for the pox" – motivated less by lustful impudence than by some demonic quest for total mastery over self and others. Between eloquently misogynistic speeches, frenzied grapplings with the women and moments of near-hysterical self-congratulation, he sits austere in meditation or prows the stage practising Tai-Chi. His emotional isolation is almost total, breached only by a few moments of bitter compassion for Harcourt when the latter appears to have lost Althea. At this point Oldman manages to make of what looks like the text a fairly perfunctory aside – "Poor Harcourt, I am sorry thou hast missed her" – a momentary revelation of both pity and envy at the spectacle of Harcourt's affectionate normality.

Alex Jennings almost succeeds in making Sparkish the centre of the play: his wonderfully impervious stupidity, the anxious movement of his eyes from speaker to speaker as he tries to grasp the rapid movement of that "wit" he professes but can never attain, the almost sub-human innocence of his confidence that others are there for his use; make him an object of constant fascination. He is effectively balanced by Karen Drury's highly intelligent Althea, whose face is a vivid diorama of mingled disbelief, hilarity and reluctant contempt as she is gradually brought to understand the depth of her fiancé's complacent cynicism. Cheryl Campbell plays Margery Pinchwife as a bouncing, enthusiastic hoyden. She turns a neat backward somersault on to the couch in her first scene, strides round the revolving stage to get exercise ("she requires as much airing as her husband's horse", comments an amused Althea) and giggles with delight at her own wickedness as she is drawn into the liaison with Horner. Emphasizing her single-minded determination to enjoy herself on her first (and probably her last) visit to London, Cheryl Campbell allows her to remain innocent until her last line. It is, we realize, only when she finally denies to her husband that she loves Horner, that Horner's corruption taints her.

These characters create their own environments. In her husband's town lodgings the guileless Mrs Pinchwife unpacks a huge trunk and carefully arranges a long row of well-worn soft toy animals – one of which Pinchwife as a jealous rage subsequently tears apart with his teeth; Horner inhabits a sparse darkened space furnished only with a purple glass light-sculpture and a hard bed; for the other characters, the props (personal stereos and computers, neon signs, glittering showcases dropping from the flies to indicate the fashionable shopping arcade of the New Exchange) display a world dominated by money, stylish ostentation and quick gratification.

Add to all this a string trio playing witty incidental music in a mixture of modern and pastiche-baroque idioms; the forceful staccato "dabbling" of Wycherley's moralistic end-of-act couplets over percussive ghetto-blower music (the humiliated Pinchwife uses the obligatory disc-jockey stutter to brilliant effect as he spits out his lines at the close of Act Three: "The gallant treats, presents and gives the ball / But it's the absent c-c-cuckold pays for all"); the superbly slick scene-shifts, choreography and mime; and the result is a continually surprising, heterogeneous yet beautifully-integrated production, vigorous and almost balletic in its kaleidoscopic, constantly mobile surface. Restoration comedy can surely never be the same again.

Including him out

Zachary Leader

MICHAEL FREEDLAND
The Goldwyn Touch: A biography of Sam Goldwyn
264pp. Harrop. £9.95.
0245 542620

"I have a rule for you". Samuel Goldwyn once told a fellow executive: "a happy studio makes bad pictures." This was never Goldwyn's problem. "To be under his command even temporarily is a living hell", wrote an anonymous contributor to the *New Yorker*. For Goldwyn was not only a bully, a windbag and a cheat ("the only man who could throw a seven with one dice", according to Harpo Marx), but a perfectionist as well. "He was one of the very few people I ever worked with", recalled Julius Epstein, co-author of *Casablanca* and *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, "who thought first of all of the quality of what we were doing."

And was willing to pay for it. When duties displaced Goldwyn, he fired the director - once at a cost of 900,000 dollars. The smallest detail - a prop, a costume, a hairstyle, a phrase - had to be okayed. "What does 'in' mean?" Goldwyn once asked an aide at a screening of *Ruffly's* (1940). "It means 'noise'", the aide replied. "Well make him say 'noise' in that case." This change was reputed to have cost Goldwyn between fifteen and twenty thousand dollars.

Rampant wilfulness lay at the heart not only of Goldwyn's success but of his notorious verbal soliloquies. Not all "Goldwynisms" derive from ignorance; many are a product of simple, naked egotism. "For your information, I'd like to ask you a question." "When I want your opinion I'll give it to you." "I'm exhausted from not talking." "You and I have a big problem." Goldwyn once informed Adolph Zukor: "You've got Gary Cooper, and I want him." According to Darryl F. Zanuck (who would know) it was "chemically impossible for Sam ever to see any other viewpoint than his own. It isn't a matter of arguing or logic. It's just chemically impossible." This is something suggested by even the most famous of Goldwynisms, such as "include me out!" and "strongest weakpoint!"

Inevitably, Goldwyn worked alone. Though he gave his name to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, the partnership was short-lived, and most of his seventy films - including *Dead End* (1937), *The*

Goldwyn Follies (1938), *Wuthering Heights* (1939), *The Little Foxes* (1941), *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), *The Secret Life of Walter Mitty* (1947) and *Guns and Dolls* (1955) - were independently produced. By 1925 he had his own studio and stable of stars, and the only lasting professional association he ever managed was with his second wife, Frances, to whose excellent judgment he seems to have owed much. This independence was evident early on, as was his astonishing energy and drive. Goldwyn (né Gelbfisz - and hence, courtesy of Ellis Island, Goldfish) was born in Warsaw in 1882. At the age of eleven he ran



Samuel Goldwyn playing cards with his second wife, Frances Howard, reproduced from the book reviewed here.

away from home, eventually making his way to England. At fourteen he set sail for the United States, having stolen the money for his passage. Three years later, he was "the most successful glove salesman in the whole of the United States", and by 1909 he was making fifteen thousand dollars a week. His entry into the movie business a year later was no less meteoric.

Even Goldwyn's enemies conceded his sure movie instincts. "Quality" was what he sought, and he always went after the best. Among the writers he employed (often billing them above the film's title) were George F. Kaufman and Robert E. Sherwood, Lillian Hellman, Her-

man J. Mankiewicz and James Thurber. At one point he even tried to get Sigmund Freud to work for him, and several times approached Bernard Shaw. (Freud simply refused to see him, while as for Shaw: "The trouble, Mr Goldwyn, is that you are only interested in art, and I am only interested in money.") Even when he got his man, though, the results were not always happy. Maureen Maeterlinck signed on, and promptly submitted an adaptation of *The Life of a Bee*. "My God", said the mopey Goldwyn. "He's written a story where the hero is a bee."

The Goldwyn Touch is Michael Freedlund's

nineteenth showbiz biography (among his other titles are *Peter O'Toole*, *The Two Lives of Errol Flynn*, *Dino*, *The Dean Martin Story*). Even of its type it is a terrible book, full of awkward and ungrammatical sentences, feeble jokes, misprints. It seems not to have been edited at all. There is no list of Goldwyn's films, important dates and relationships (with his first wife and daughter, for instance) are fudged or omitted, the chronology is unclear. Though the book contains a number of funny anecdotes, readers would be best advised to wait for the much-projected authorized biography by A. Scott Berg. Goldwyn was a monster, but he deserved better than this.

Scenes from a life

John Russell Taylor

FRANK GADO
The Passion of Ingmar Bergman
547pp. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
£14.40.
0822305860

Since many critics, like most of the public during Ingmar Bergman's early career found his work impenetrable, there was a tendency also to write impenetrably about him. But this is some time ago now, and what seemed strangely obscure in 1964, when the English version of John Donner's *The Personal Vision of Ingmar Bergman* came out, or even in 1966 when *Persona*, probably Bergman's most difficult film, appeared, has now, with habit and the passage of time, been reduced to manageable proportions. Bergman himself has not been treated from being a controversial modernist to becoming an accepted classic and cinematic elder statesman.

So the timing of Frank Gado's *The Passion of Ingmar Bergman* is absolutely right: this is the moment, as even Bergman's "last" film *Fanny and Alexander* (1983), is falling into place as history, for a comprehensive and serious study of his work. The book is an investigation of the man as well as the films and writings, and it is pleasing to find that, while Professor Gado does not indulge in gossip for its own sake, he is perfectly ready to examine Bergman's chequered emotional life when it seems to be relevant. And with an artist as consistently autobiographical as Bergman it is not always easy to decide what is and what is not relevant.

Indeed, the particular triumph of Gado's book is that it demonstrates clearly the constant interlinking between Bergman's emotional state and his thought processes. In the past Bergman has been treated as a philosopher on film, as though the impulses behind his film-making were almost entirely intellectual. But it is unlikely that films which were primarily intellectual constructs, without a weight of personal emotion behind them, could last as well as Bergman's have; moreover they continue to move as well as to puzzle and to provoke. Of course, not all of Bergman's films have lasted equally well, and Gado is the first to say so unequivocally. No reader is going to agree completely with his judgments; some will feel that he is unduly severe about some of the comedies, unduly impressed by *Persona* (key work though it is), and much too hard on *Hour of the Wolf* ("nothing short of an embarrassment"), but on the whole his opinions are sound.

In certain respects the book reads like an epitaph. In the main this is Bergman's own fault, since he has been so insistent that *Fanny and Alexander* was his last film. If indeed an artist ever can choose his own finale, *Fanny and Alexander* would be the perfect ending: light but not unserious, it touches on many of the director's favourite themes and seems to find the kind of reconciliation with which Prospero breaks his rod. But life is seldom quite so neat, and Bergman does appear, despite a great deal of equivocation, to be continuing to make films. Maybe documentaries like *The Fanny and Alexander Document* or *Karin's Face* do not count; perhaps it does make some radical difference that *After the Rehearsal* and *The Blessed Ones* were made on video rather than on film. But clearly the cinematic urge persists. It would be early yet - Bergman is, after all, only sixty-eight - to discount the possibility that in a few years *The Passion of Ingmar Bergman* may be in need of revision and updating. But for the time being, if you can accommodate only one book on Bergman, this should be it.

The Hollywood Film Industry: A reader (290pp). Routledge and Kegan Paul in association with the British Film Institute. Paperback, £7.95. 0 7100 9730 1, edited by Paul Kerr is a collection of essays dealing with industrial Hollywood. They include "D. W. Griffith and the banks: A case study in film financing" by Janet Wasko; and "Mass produced photography: Economic and signifying practices in the first years of Hollywood" by Janet Staiger.

Exploring the ocean

Bryan J. Wolf

HELENA COOPER
Winslow Homer Watercolours
259pp. Yale University Press. £25.
0300036957

In the early years of the twentieth century, Winslow Homer, already secure in his reputation as one of America's leading oil painters, came to reconsider his career. "In the future I will live by my watercolours", he wrote to a friend. Almost a century later, the public has been given an opportunity to test that claim. In honour of the sesquicentennial of his birth, a comprehensive exhibition of Homer's watercolours is currently touring major museums in the United States. Organized by Helen A. Cooper, Curator at the Yale University Art Gallery, the exhibition is accompanied by her excellent catalogue which, because of its scholarship as well as the quality of its reproductions, is a significant book in its own right.

Homer was slow to discover the expressive possibilities of the medium. He began his career as an apprentice in a Boston lithography shop, and soon branched out into freelance illustration work for popular magazines of the day. After the Civil War began, he travelled with the Union army for a while, sending back illustrations of Civil War subjects to *Harper's Weekly*. He started to experiment with oil painting in the mid-1860s, and found himself, in 1866, suddenly in the public eye when one of his war canvases, "Prisoners from the Front", received critical acclaim. The cropped composition, muted colours and complex psychology of the painting marked the beginning of a new style in American art, dominated until then by Hudson River School landscapes and genre scenes of boundless optimism.

What limited experience Homer had with watercolours was confined to preliminary sketches for his drawings and illustrations. It was not until 1873, when he was thirty-seven, that he went to an international exhibition in New York organized by the American Society of Painters in Water Colors. It contained almost 600 European and American watercolours, including 200 contemporary British works collected by the English critic and entrepreneur, Henry Blackburn. Homer recognized the possibilities of the medium for the first time.

Almost immediately, he began to experiment. At first his watercolours were considered by critics original but disturbing; they were too "unfinished" for contemporary taste. Unlike the prevailing fashion of the time, which emphasized tightly drawn and highly finished surfaces, Homer's work was relatively loose and spontaneous in style. Not until Impressionism several years later provided the American public with a way of seeing that seemed to approximate, and thereby validate, his method did he gain wholehearted acceptance. His career developed, rather unevenly, in a single direction: away from the finish and control that led one critic to characterize contemporary watercolour as "flicking a picture to death with small touches", and towards the spontaneous and accidental manner that, together with his luminous washes, became the hallmark of his mature work.

Cooper's portrait of Homer conforms generally to that constructed by critics and biographers before her. She fits at his possible affair with the red-headed girl who modelled for him in the early 1870s, she confirms his shift from dandyish beginnings to the anti-social posturing later in life (though she notes that he was never a recluse and always affiliated himself with fine clubs and first-class hotels), and she watches, almost from a distance, the events that characterized Homer's inner life: the death of his mother and the companionship of his father and brother. What she introduces to the canon for the first time is material which draws on recent scholarship in other fields: the pressures of professionalism that initially kept Homer at a distance from watercolours because of their amateur status, and the sportsman's ethos, which characterized upper-class American society in the late nineteenth century. She is especially convincing in her account of the latter, reconstructing the invisible which drew together America's corpo-

rate and social elite in fashionable hunting retreats in the wilderness areas of upstate New York and Canada.

Cooper's originality lies in her reconstruction of Homer's evolving technical mastery as a watercolourist. She details the complex range of methods available to him, noting those techniques he adopted, those he adapted and those he rejected altogether. With remarkable sensitivity, she unravels the process by which individual images slowly took life on the page.

By the end of *Winslow Homer Watercolours*, we understand how crucial a role watercolour played in Homer's development as an artist. We also begin to suspect how right he was in his assessment of his own strength as a watercolourist. Where his oils tend to be statements for the ages, composed as dense and occasionally metaphysical explorations on a theme, the watercolours render the transitory eternal. They tell us about the smells of a summer day in the Bahamas, the poignant arc of a fisherman's fly and rod, the hallucinatory quietness of an ocean sunset. Above all, they tell us, as the oils do not, what little there is to know of the private and sensual rhythms of a public man's life.

There are mysteries, of course, that the watercolours fail to solve. They hint at Homer's changing notions of sexuality. Throughout the 1870s, his images of women bordered on the conventional. His female figures were often fashionable and almost always flirtatious. In the early 1880s, Homer spent two years in England living in a fishing community at Cullercoats in Northumberland. His women were never the same again. They became heroic and curiously desexualized. It is as if he had discovered in the women at Cullercoats a new force which seems, like the ocean itself,

Makers unmade

Wanda M. Corn

DIANA KORZENIK
Drawn to Art: A nineteenth-century American dream
279pp. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England; available in Britain from Trevor Brown Associates. £30.
087451 339 1

Drawn to Art is a biography of three artists who belonged to the rank and file of nineteenth-century wood-engravers, weekend watercolourists and painters that occasionally produced the greatness of a Fitzhugh Lane or Winslow Homer. When Diana Korzenik came upon a New England family's collection of sketchbooks, drawings, watercolours, paintings, woodblocks and test proofs - the life's work of three siblings - she was determined to discover why Americans from humble origins with little schooling and few sources of inspiration were "drawn to art".

As far as one can tell, the Cross family's art - of fourteen colour plates, only five are of Cross paintings - is very ordinary. It is their unfulfilled artistic lives that provide the subject of this book. All three children were encouraged to draw in their early years by an accomplished artist-neighbour and access to art manuals. They all three aspired but failed to make drawing central to their careers. Both brothers left farming for Boston and jobs in the wood-engraving industry. Henry, the more ambitious of the two, eventually became a partner in Samuel Kilburn's well-respected wood-engraving company. But success was short-lived. The advent of half-tone reproductions forced both men to take to the road and support themselves with odd jobs. Their sister, Emma, meanwhile, taught in local schools, travelled to Boston to attend formal art classes and attempted to earn her living at photo-retouching. She never married and eventually moved back to the family home, where she served on the local school board and directed the town's first public library.

Korzenik is at her best when demonstrating how self-instruction through drawing manuals paved the way to art training in the schools and the establishment of museums and local art associations; or how the so-called fine and industrial arts became increasingly separate in late nineteenth-century America. She is know-

ambiguously maternal, creative and, at moments, destructive. All this is present in the watercolours, more perhaps than in the oils, but none of it is explained.

So too with Homer's famous statement that "The Sun will not rise, or set, without my notice, and thanks." Cooper accepts the passage, as readers before her have, as testimony to Homer's attentiveness to nature and concern with light. But one may also read the closing two words of the passage as an afterthought, tacked on as a defence against a degree of ambition bordering on arrogance. Seen from this vantage, Homer's words reveal another side to his art, a sublime dimension that we see surfacing behind the apparent "naturalness" of his images. There are moments when Homer resembles Friedrich rather than the Barbizon painters he consciously learned from. An older Romanticism floats through his work, reminding us of earlier artists who allegorize nature as part of their personal agon with it. Homer was as much a contemporary of Ryder and the Symbolists as the Barbizon School, and we lose something of his power when we forget this side of him.

The future, I suspect, looks quite bright for Homer's watercolours. This lavishly illustrated book reminds us not only of the extraordinary quality of his achievement, but of the larger role that non-oil works have played in the development of modern art. Homer's watercolours are repositories of experimentation: in subject-matter, in technique, in the very possibilities of the medium. What Homer learned from watercolour - and what we learn from him - is the freedom of the artist to experiment and play with limits, not because experimentation is the means to an end, but because exploration within a medium is an end in itself.

ledgeable about the institutional incentives which, at the time, motivated Americans to take up pencil, brush and engraving tools.

The lessons of history, however, are not always foremost in a biography which often indulges in too much affectionate detail. Korzenik has so much empathy for her subjects and their artefacts that she tends to exaggerate the significance of ordinary experience and everyday art, forgetting to compare the lives and performances of her subjects with those of their better-known, more skilled contemporaries. She too readily assumes that the Cross family's failures were those of the culture on the whole, and that had they only had greater means, and lived in a more generous time, they might have become major figures and led less fractured lives. But it is not at all clear that any one of the Cross children had the desire, discipline or talent to be more than a general practitioner in the industrial arts. Foster seemed content as a wood-engraver; there is little evidence that Henry, the most talented, wanted to exhibit his paintings or to study and travel in order to improve his skills; and Emma seems to have offered little resistance to the restrictive boundaries of a spinster's life.

Korzenik seems astonished that her humble subjects had the will to make art in a society in the process of industrialization and weak in artistic training and encouragement. But what is more impressive about her story is the way that it underlines the centrality of visual thinking in post-Civil War America. Whatever the degree of talent or station in life, drawing was considered to be good for you. Ordinary people learned to sketch during childhood just as they learned to sing, to write letters and poetry. For some, artistic skills led to a trade or to the fine arts. For so many others, particularly women, in the nineteenth century, drawing, sketching and watercolour painting were respectable pastimes. *Drawn to Art* is a poignant reminder that less than a century ago people regarded the sketchbook as they did the letter or the diary, as a healthy and enlightened way of exercising the mind and of keeping a record of time and place.

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Good, plain, middlebrow challenge

Christopher Reid

LAURIE NORTON MOFFATT
Norman Rockwell: A definitive catalogue
Volume One, 575pp; Volume Two, 1,152pp.
Trevor Brown Associates. £130.
09615273 15

There is something terrifying about the sheer size of Norman Rockwell's output. Like Mozart, whom he resembled in his astonishing fluency, or Dickens, or Picasso, he was one of those artists of whom it is tempting to say that he was a force of nature. In Rockwell's case, however, "a force of good-nature" would probably be more accurate. His relentless bonhomie, the coercive charitableness of his vision, one's growing impatience in the face of so much liberally applied sweetness and light - these are the things that finally disqualify him from a place alongside the creators of *Don Giovanni* and *Great Expectations*. And yet...

The problem of Rockwell's stature would no doubt be less acute if it were not for his prodigious technical gifts. It is as if from the very beginning he had set out to demonstrate, by virtue of dogged adherence to those standards of decency and craftsmanship which the art of the present century has so bewilderingly flouted, that everything would now be fine and dandy if only good, plain, American, middlebrow sense had prevailed in the aesthetic sphere, as it has striven to in the political.

Rockwell's oil painting for the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*, January 13, 1962, is typical of his methods. Called "The Connoisseur", it places a stout white male citizen in front of an ironically painstaking pastiche of Jackson Pollock, dribbles and splashes meticulously rendered, and invites us to guess at the look on his face and the thoughts running through his head. To his credit, Rockwell was too cunning to express his contempt outright. Rather, his trick was to absorb what might have been a potentially threatening element into the anodyne atmosphere of his own created world, thereby supposedly taming and neutralizing it. His mock-Pollock is a counterpoint to those gawky urchins and gauche red-necks who embody, in his work, as much as he was prepared to contemplate of violence and anarchy. For all its social awkwardness and domestic rough-and-tumble, the America he chose to depict was really a very safe and heart-warming place in which to imagine oneself living.

It was Rockwell's technical sophistication, refined to serve a vision of the utmost blandness, that made him such a revelling commentator on American political events from the First World War until the late 1960s. Whether humorous or sentimental, his pictures of United States servicemen were conceived frankly, and understandably, in the spirit of propaganda. More worryingly, his portraits of politicians might have been painted by their tendency to ennoble and to monumentalize. It soon becomes clear that Rockwell's main purpose was to offer America the most pleasing possible image of itself, and sixteen years after his death the leaders of the country may still have something like his dream of a small-town democratic idyll in mind as they blunder about the world imposing their good nature on all and sundry.

The two huge volumes of *Norman Rockwell: A definitive catalogue*, compiled by Laurie Norton Moffatt with admirable thoroughness and care, are a generous memorial to a lifetime's extraordinary industry. Most of Rockwell's work, even in such a medium as oil paint, was conceived for reproduction, and it transfers handsomely to these glossy pages. Whether so much that was designed for purely ephemeral ends deserves to be salvaged remains open to question, but Rockwell's challenge to the aesthetic prejudices of our age cannot be lightly dismissed, and one is glad to have it documented here in all its intimidating bulk.

Perpetual recreation

David Pocock

BRUCE LINCOLN
Myth, Cosmos, and Society: Indo-European
themes of creation and destruction
278pp. Harvard University Press. £18.95.
0674 597753

This book is sadly undersold by a stale title. Bruce Lincoln has traced out in some detail the Indo-European equivalents of our own medieval correspondences both among material things and between material and immaterial — parts of the body, planets, plants, animals, virtues, social groups, diseases and so on. The big difference is that he is dealing with correspondences within a coherent cosmology that had a cosmogonic sacrifice as its origin and centre, whereas our ancestors juggled with the elements of three or four cosmologies at least. In Indo-European cosmology the sacrificial dismemberment of the primordial being generated the natural and social universe, which is maintained by the repetition of the sacrifice. Professor Lincoln is especially good at demonstrating the ways in which created elements of all sorts contributed to this perpetual recreation, and his main theme is the constant interflow between the created and the creative. The cosmic being is destroyed to create cosmos, but is then recreated by the destruction of its own creation in sacrifice. Breath goes out of the body to become wind, but it flows back to become breath if the creature is to live: this is an excellent image of a process which Lincoln demonstrates in several areas from a wide range of freshly translated texts.

The first six chapters are engrossing reading: "Cosmogony, Anthropogony, Homology"; "Sacrifice"; "The Origin of Food and the Nature of Nutrition"; "Cures for Baldness, Disposal of Hair"; "Magical Healing"; "Death and Resurrection, Time and Eternity". Nevertheless the performance is oversold by the blurb, which trumpets the "audacious claim . . . that in a host of cultures from India to Iceland the individual, society, and the cosmos are linked in a single mythic system". Audacious fiddlesticks; but Lincoln himself tends to write as though he personally had discovered the Indo-European world, and as though the kind of thinking about the relations between things that he analyses so well had not, for years now, been reported from cultures well outside the Indo-European range. This limitation gives a kind of youthful zest to the writing but it makes one wonder where the great pioneer of Indo-European studies in our times, the late Georges Dumézil (the subject of disagreement between Lincoln and others in the TLS recently), stands in all this, and why there is no reference to him until the seventh and final chapter.

Then there is the language: we are given not just "cosmogony" and "anthropogony" but also "sitology" (Greek *sitos*, food), and then "regiogy" and "sociogy" and this logogony actually blunts the argument. Everything is generated in cosmos, that is what "cosmos" means, but these neologisms suggest discrete areas as though the world of humans can be set off, so to speak, against society and either against the cosmos. And then Lincoln calls his correspondences "homologies" and says of them, "Between the two items linked in . . . a homology there is . . . a fundamental consubstantiality, whereby the one entity may be created out of the material substance of the other." The items thus related are said to be "alloforms" of each other and one item is said to be "homologized" to another: so the word "alloform" is really superfluous. However, this notion of consubstantiality is put to good use even if it has to work against the boundaries suggested by the "gonies". But "alloform" is also slippery: we can understand that plants and hair are interchangeable, and both that the sacrificial beast becomes the primordial being and that designated parts of its dismembered carcass feed their designated counterparts in the body social. But at other times, "symbol", "emblem" or "image" would have served better. Lincoln speaks, for example, of a "sweeping homology" between king and social hierarchy which are "presented as alloforms of each other", and he goes on to sketch the familiar view of the king as the head of the social body, and embodiment of the health of society.

But king and people are no more alloforms of each other than are king and crown, not if the earlier definition of "alloform" is to hold.

Chapter Seven is thoroughly embarrassing and in it we came to understand the attitude to Dumézil. Lincoln, without a word of warning, descends into the People's Court to deliver his credentials in a set of Adrian Mole-style Marxisms: "I would argue [he doesn't] that we may accurately view the priestly class as an elite intelligentsia devoted . . . to the propagation of a social ideology encoded in sociogonic and regicogonic myths." Unlike the priests, the warriors were "materially productive", but these two "classes" were respectively the ideological and coercive apparatus of a society whose evaluations "were accepted as part of the commoners' own (false) consciousness". This, and much more of the same, is anachronistic fantasy. There never was any such thing as the Indo-European society, and what members of the Indo-European family thought, felt and did over the millennia and across the vast area from which we have texts we shall never know. Dumézil always refused to indulge in this sort of projection and hence he is the butt of the following comical pomposity on the subject of "ideology": "He uses this term in an idiosyncratic, depoliticized fashion . . . I use *ideology* in a more conventionally Marxist sense", and so on. I have omitted Lincoln's summary of Dumézil's position, introduced with the precautionary "if I read him rightly"; well, he doesn't, as anyone who knows anything of Dumézil's work may quickly see by turning up note 57 on page 228.

There are a lot of notes, over fifty pages, and the bibliographies and indexes take up another forty-eight, so the effective loss of Chapter Seven reduces the enjoyable text to 140 pages — just over half the whole book.

The power of being possessed

Vieda Skultans

I. M. LEWIS
Religion in Context: Cults and charisma
139pp. Cambridge University Press.
£20 (paperback, £6.95).
0521 306167

I. M. Lewis's collection *Religion in Context: Cults and charisma* is based on five essays and an inaugural lecture drawn from his work during the past twenty years. His abiding interest in spirit-possession cults provides the connecting theme. It also serves as a jumping-off point for a theoretical comparison of "positive" and "negative" mystical experience: from this perspective, spirit-possession is linked to the subjects of the other essays, namely, "Introspective witchcraft", cannibalism and shamanism. "Introspective witchcraft", where the accuser and accused are the same person, has largely been neglected by anthropologists because it does not fit readily into the social-tension theory of witchcraft. Lewis proposes that both "introspective witchcraft" and spirit-possession be viewed as "indirect strategies of attack", which provide a non-confrontational method for dealing with conflict. Both possessed women and self-accused witches are able to mobilize support from their husbands and kin for their involuntary plight. The essay on cannibalism rests on shaker ground. Ioan Lewis dismisses Arenas's theory that allegations of cannibalism are a means of labelling and stigmatizing disparaged societies. Rather, it is suggested, we should look at the meanings attributed to cannibalistic practices, and their relationship to beliefs concerning sexual potency and witchcraft. After some meaty anthropological illustrations, there follows an intriguing comparative digression on the layout of pornographic magazines and cookery recipes, the whole being given academic respectability by a few choice psychoanalytic references.

The essay on shamanism returns to Professor Lewis's home ground, putting forward the highly plausible suggestion that the terms "shamanism" and "spirit possession" vary not so much in relation to the societies studied as to the nationality of the anthropologists. Shamans are not found in Africa, not because

Conception of the world

Boris Oguibene

F. B. J. KUIPER
Ancient Indian Cosmogony: Selected essays
Edited by J. Irwin
272pp. New Delhi: Vikas. Rs145.
07069 13701

In this remarkable collection of articles F. B. J. Kuiper not only uncovers for us the subtleties of Indian conceptions of creation, he also trains us to reflect on the basic principles of mythography and on complex questions of "creative thought", that is, thought whose object is any creative process, cosmic or otherwise.

Creation in ancient, mostly Vedic, India was seen as a twofold process: as first, the differentiation into two parts of an undivided (and thus oppressive and unliveable) whole; and then the uniting of these parts into a totality. Nearly all Vedic cosmogony may be explained by these two facets, which are sometimes combined or seen as completing each other. This basic dichotomy of creation implies two consequences: either two opposed elements result from the dismemberment of an anterior whole and are made to communicate through a third element; or the uniting entity somehow preserves within it the former divided state of things. The Vedic god Vishnu, for instance, personifies such a unity, and was endowed with two contrary emblems: the celestial bird, Garuda, and the underworld snake, Shesha.

Thus in Vedic as in other mythologies, the idea of a connecting "centre" implies at least two opposed entities sharing common properties. It is far from evident that such opposed

pairs as "heaven and earth", "day and night", or "light and darkness" have anything in common, but by producing these and similar pairs mythopoetic thought succeeds in presenting a picture of how the universe came to grow. This growth has two main stages: an undifferentiated unity (which may have been filled by a flood or have as its sole element the "unstable earth" or "winged" mountains) with a first "centre"; and then, in order to create the dual cosmos, a second stage in which the "centre" will be wickled by a cosmogonic protagonist such as Indra or Prajapati. So there is no cosmos without a fundamental duality, elementary orderliness implies a bipolar tension. Kuiper goes on to stress the importance of bipolarity and shows how many early Vedic and later Indian mythological stories follow rather simple scenarios: as soon as two poles are created, a third element has to come into being which will both separate and connect the first two. This element will be either the space between them or the wind or a mountain, or, finally, an anthropomorphic being.

Vedic cosmogonic dualism is peculiar in several features. The duality is achieved in such a way that a new entity is emitted by an old whole, which does not entirely vanish. It subsists as, for example, "nonbeing" (Sanskrit *asat*, the world of unformed matter), even though it has been replaced by "being", that which is" (Sanskrit *sat*, the ordered cosmos), and continues to exist on the fringes of the created world, which Kuiper interprets by arguing that the myth does not merely imply a succession of two different states, but instead of saying that the ordered cosmos has disorder as its "origin", we could say that the two are "related". Another peculiarity is that in the making of the dual cosmos further dichotomies are not only allowed, but are a necessity of the system: the primary division of the cosmos into upper-world and under-world is repeated, for example, in the classification of space into North and East and West and South respectively; and then in the dichotomy between Soma (god and ecstatic beverage) and Agni (the fire god); Agni being further associated with the right hand and Soma with the left, and so on.

One may well wonder whether a binary approach, such as Kuiper's, does not reflect basic patterns of both human ideas about creation and cosmic creation itself. Kuiper recalls that the undifferentiated state of the cosmos distinguished by a series of negative characteristics (among them instability), must be followed by a more acceptable state, reached after a first partition. Provisional stability is thus guaranteed. He also discusses striking parallels between prenatal anamnesis of the human ovum and cosmogony as Indian tradition presents it, between the ovum bobbing on the amniotic water while being sullied by it and the bit of mud (the future earth) floating on the waters of an undivided primordial world. Like the ovum giving birth to a new life after being fertilized by a spermatozoon, the primordial mud (or mountain, or hill) will be struck by Indra's weapon, and will burst open and propagate life. Thus human embryogenesis and Vedic cosmogony correspond in nearly all details in a dual enactment of humankind's history.

Kuiper is reluctant to accept the label "structuralist", although he makes such statements as that "only a structural approach can help us to understand the function of this god [Varuna] in the total system of mythological concepts". But from now on we shall owe to him quite a few novel formulations about the radical dualism of the human personality, about conception as both the transcending and the starting-point of dualism, and about "centre" being both contradictory and beneficial. Readers will admire *Ancient Indian Cosmogony* not only for its intellectual qualities, but also for the refined theory it advances, supported by Kuiper's erudition. Its richness comes also from ideas that Kuiper has been defending for many years: that the Rig-Veda was created to celebrate the New Year ritual; and that the verbal contests associated with this ritual are comparable to the potlatch ceremonies of the American Kwakiwits. But these views, as well as the notion that the Vedic poets were unable to visualize the Cosmic Order, seem to me more open to discussion than the rest of Kuiper's discoveries.

Gift of tongues

Michael Maratsos

STEVEN PINKER
Language Learnability and Language Development
433pp. Harvard University Press. £23.60.
0674 510542

Over the years, an impressive body of evidence has emerged that there is something specifically human about the ability to learn a natural language. For example, the relative lack of interest among chimpanzees in symbol use may be contrasted with the very great robustness of language-learning in human children, across a wide variety of circumstances. Yet this evidence does not show that learning a language involves a highly detailed and innate linguistic element, as Chomsky has argued. In *Language Learnability and Language Development*, Steven Pinker argues first that we should assume Chomsky's argument to be correct in studying language acquisition and then attempts to use this assumption to prove its validity.

Pinker's initial arguments for this very strong assumption of Chomskyan nativism consist in large part of criticisms of earlier investigations, which have generally attempted to analyse carefully what the data indicate the child to be acquiring at given stages in the process. Hypotheses are then formed as to whether the child has acquired a certain set of linguistic rules by a certain stage and whether a linguistic description such as "transformational grammar" fits the data. In proceeding thus, Pinker holds, investigators have lost sight of the goal of producing an overall account of how the child could reach the complex end-state of "knowing" a language at all. In addition, the empirical results all too often resist clear interpretation.

Pinker offers instead the advantages as he sees them of a programme called "learnability work", whereby the child is assumed to reach a definite end-state, as described by a formal adult grammar. He claims that making this assumption will resolve many empirical ambiguities. Second, he argues, we should assume on methodological grounds that the child has a great deal of innate linguistic knowledge. Our goal is to produce complete, scientific descriptions of acquisition, and building in highly specific knowledge makes it easier to devise them. For the more that is present in the child to begin with, the less acquisition there is to account for (I am giving this argument exactly: which is exactly parallel to the argument that it is easier to get from A to B if we place A very close to B to begin with).

The core of the book then consists of examining ways in which the child might apply this innate knowledge to a variety of acquisitional problems, such as the construction of formal grammatical categories, or the learning of inflectional systems. Here, Pinker's aim once again is to get the child to the end-state as quickly as possible. As each problem arises he discusses the extant empirical data in the light of his hypotheses, and these discussions range in intellectual and rhetorical quality from lawyerlike competence to near-brilliance.

Language Learnability and Language Development indeed is one of those rare books which every serious worker in the field should read, both for its stock of particular hypotheses and analysis, and for the way it forces one to re-examine basic assumptions as to how one's work should be done. Its criticisms of other approaches to language acquisition (including some of my own) often go to the heart of the difficulties.

But for all that, Pinker cannot be said to have proved that the learnability approach is the one that should be universally adopted. To begin with, throughout the book there is a major confusion between his methodological assumption and the claimed substantive success: it may prove possible to give a complete account of how some language-system might be learned, though often it depends on what the author himself admits are *ad hoc* interpretations of the data. He concludes, however, that at least a complete account has been given, while those who do not assume such extensive innate equipment as he does have enormous difficulty giving any such thing. Pinker's moral is that "non-nativists" cannot give such

complete accounts because language acquisition in fact rests upon detailed innate knowledge. Yet such extensive innate knowledge was assumed in the first place to make it easy to give complete accounts. Pinker has confused the methodological consequences of his assumption with an actual fact about nature. The non-nativist, in effect, was simply not clever enough to have put A very close to B in the first place, and so has more trouble getting the child from one state to the other.

The important question is whether, once achieved, Pinker's complete account illuminates the empirical results of research into acquisition. Here, although *Language Learnability and Language Development* is a fine piece of work, its successes as science can hardly be compared, say, to the prediction of the movements of the tides and the planets, or even to the prediction of the distribution of flower colours by Mendelian laws. Probably the best thing in it is the analysis of what is called Paradigm Formation, a mechanism for the acquisition of declensional and conjugational classes



A detail from René Burri's "Valkschiele, München", taken from his Die Deutschen Photographien 1957-1964 with text by Hans Magnus Enzensberger (208pp. Munich: Schirmer/Mosel. DM39.80. 3 88814 161 3).

of nouns and verbs which Pinker extends in interesting ways to a variety of problems. But, as he himself notes, Paradigm Formation comes from traditional, pre-transformational linguistics, and has been used before by non-nativists like Brian MacWhinney to account for aspects of language acquisition, so its successes do not support nativist assumptions *per se*.

Elsewhere, Pinker's nativist assumptions collide very seriously with facts both of language acquisition, and of that foundation stone of nativism, the study of linguistic universals. This shows very clearly in his discussion of two key proposals in *Language Learnability and Language Development*, called respectively the Semantic Cueing or Bootstrapping hypothesis and the Uniqueness Condition.

Semantic Cueing was originally proposed by Jane Grimshaw, and is a skilful attempt to solve a very serious problem in children's acquisition of such formal categories as grammatical subject and object, or noun and verb. Briefly, what is available to the child as evidence of language structure is sound and meaning. Yet formal categories like subject and object cannot be adequately described as either of these, nor as any straightforward mixture of them. According to the Semantic Cueing hypothesis, the child knows innately of the existence of such categories, and also of certain useful correspondences they have to semantic categories. Thus, in simple sentences, semantic agents will always be grammatical subjects, even though not all grammatical subjects will be agents. Assuming this innate knowledge, the child can analyse the structural properties of subjects more generally in the language.

But in the correspondence it assumes, Semantic Cueing reveals itself as the hypothesis of a native speaker of English. On data from other languages, it fails. Keenan, for example, has analysed thirty-four grammatical

and semantic properties which are often correlated with grammatical subjects across languages. No one language has all of them, nor is any of them consistently associated with subjecthood, though some are likely to be. And Pinker is aware that even in English, agents are not always subjects, as in passive sentences like "the dog was chased by the cat". But English-speaking children do not hear passives early on. If they did, this would constitute a major falsification of the hypothesis.

In a number of languages, though, it is the semantic patient, or the object of an action, that frequently has subject-like properties, not the agent. For example, in Tagalog, every sentence has to have what is called an *ang*-phrase, eg. "ran ang-dog" or "happy ang-dog", which is, if anything, in Tagalog, the grammatical subject. It must be semantically definite (eg. refer to "the dog" not "a dog"). More centrally, if a transitive sentence has a semantically definite patient of the action, this has to be the *ang*-phrase, and not the agent. Thus the Tagalog translation of "the dog ate the bone" would

of the characteristics of a biologically programmed trait like walking: great complexity, naturalness of learning by members of the species in many different environmental conditions, a fairly consistent overall chronology of development. But it has neither the stately uniformity nor the honing consistency of walking seen cross-culturally. Its variations, and the improbability of conventional gentle explanations for these, point to a much greater modifiability by no doubt partly random cultural forces, and a corresponding freer capacity for induction in the child to deal with it.

Pinker's hypotheses in *Language Learnability and Language Development* conflict also with general facts about language acquisition itself, a difficulty which can be illustrated by considering the Uniqueness Condition. This theory, originally proposed by Kenneth Wexler, suggests that the child assumes that a given meaning is not encoded by two separate grammatical forms, unless such double encoding is directly displayed in the language he or she hears.

Take the well-known case of the English past tense. Children learning English commonly over-regularize irregular past tenses, producing *broked*, say, instead of *broke*. The problem is, why do they stop doing so? The Uniqueness Condition has it that if a child has been producing *broked*, he or she will in the end correctly analyse a heard usage of *broke*. Only one of the two forms can be thought correct unless both are heard, but only *broke* is heard, so *broke* replaces *broked*. Yet empirically, children do not act as though they have such a solution, but may alternate between the over-regularized *-ed* form and the irregular form for a period of months to years, using both *broke* and *broked*.

So if the Uniqueness Condition resolves the problem immediately, why does it take so long for children to appear to resolve it? Pinker's explanation is that limitations in their capacity for information-processing set them continual problems in suppressing the "general-rule" form. But this is implausible. Children may produce the over-regularized form in sentences a few words only in length, while successfully controlling in other sentences complex constructions like relativization or conjunction. It is clear that their analysis and resolution of such alternatives is a long-drawn-out tabulation process, not one which quickly seizes upon one or two properties of the language as heard.

This conflict between theoretical quickness and empirical gradualness is not restricted to the past tense in English. Pinker finds similar problems in children's very slow acquisition of various properties of the grammatical subject-system (for example, for months they leave out obligatory grammatical subjects), their difficulties in resolving the appropriate placement of auxiliary verbs in who, what, why-type questions, and many other cases. In all of these, the correct forms alternate with incorrect ones for a very long time, and Pinker has to call on *ad hoc* interpretations like information-processing difficulties again to rescue his explanation. Indeed, the complete explanations generated by his "learnability" theory do not, typically, throw light on the empirical phenomena; rather, the phenomena need to be interpreted very broadly to fit the theory.

At a general level, advocates of the learnability thesis are right to criticize much of the data-bound, largely atheoretical work that constitutes so much current study in language acquisition. To solve some of the complex problems posed by such work, it is surely the case that intelligent proposals as to how acquisition can proceed at all must form the context for empirical evaluation. But this is far from accepting the much more narrow methodology of learnability theorists and their underlying assumptions about the detailed linguistic knowledge innate in the child. Even as evidence accumulates that there must be some kind of specific biological adaptation to humans for us to be able to learn a language, problems remain, like grammatical variation between languages, that should worry proponents of the much more specific Chomskyan hypotheses. The truth of these matters will not be discovered by *a priori* evaluations of the evidence, even ones as skilfully argued as those in *Language Learnability and Language Development*.

Handwritten note in the right margin: "The dog ate the bone"

Under the watchdog's nose

Virgil Nemoianu

STEFAN AUG. DOINAS
Vînătoare cu goluri
182pp. Bucharest: Cartea Românească.
MIRCEA IVĂNESCU
Other Poems, Other Lines
Translated by S. Stoescu
230pp. Bucharest: Eminescu
ADRIAN PAUNESCU
Tătuși, Iubirea
Bucharest: Albatros.

Surprisingly, Romanian poetry is still alive and well, under historical circumstances perhaps more wretched than any the country has witnessed in the past century and a half. In fact, poets there manage once in a while to excite a wide audience. A little over a year ago, for example, four poems by Ana Blandiana published in a student monthly provoked a sensation. In them, a lyrical exasperation at the country's moral and economic decrepitude sounded loud and clear. Blundiana first made a name for herself as a very young poet in the 1960s, chiefly for her delicate eroticism and ingenious metaphorical games, but these new, outspoken poems protesting against government policy towards women, and marvelling at the nation's inclination to regard itself as an organism of vegetal passivity, caused a public stir and led to firings and reprimands among the editors of the journal that had published them.

The latest volume of Stefan Aug. Doinas was received with similar criticism. Doinas is perhaps the best living Romanian poet (attempts are reportedly being made by Romanian groups abroad to put forward his name

for the Nobel Prize), a superb translator and a lucid essayist. His poetry has an impressive range and power; he is a kind of Romanian Yeats. His early poems are often on themes from classical antiquity, and were written in a misty tone of hallowed-mongering and visionariness. In the later 1960s, however, he began to write a spare and muscular verse of moral satire and philosophical parable. In it he wrestles with the probably impossible ambition of combining a lofty Platonism with a down-to-earth language. Broad visions of cosmic magnificence are interspersed with moments of squalor and disgust.

Does Doinas's poetry have political meaning? Some of the volume's readers and certainly many of the Romanian régime's ideological watchdogs seem to believe it does. Reflections on Seneca's fate under Nero, for instance, were scrutinized with much suspicion, and the truth is of course that the guilty self-consciousness of a tyrant can recognize itself in any imagery of evil. Doinas's poetry has an exceptionally rich semantic texture, and is full of connotations and allusions. The controlling image of the present volume is of a hawk, used not for hunting but as a provider of quills for the scribe. Its recurring theme is the relationship between an outraged innocence and the violence of history: political implications are either already there or can be read into the poems.

Doinas seems unafraid of the possible political or social dimensions of poetry, whereas most other contemporary Romanian poets try assiduously to suppress them. Of them all Mircea Ivănescu seems to have come closest to an ideal lyricism of privacy. A learned poet nourished on Henry James and Virginia Woolf, he deals in melancholy, irony and a

secretive imagination. His poetry refuses the outside world so decisively that its very absence becomes meaningful. Instead he juggles the emotions of fear and humility with hidden pleasures, self-sufficiency and ungratified love. A collection of Ivănescu's engaging verse is now available in a good English translation by S. Stoescu, who teaches at the University of Bucharest. It deserves to be read not only for its quaint and personal lyricism, but for its surprising capacity to spin out of self-sufficiency a sort of meek altruism, along with the values and forms of an alternative world.

At the other extreme from Ivănescu stands the picturesque figure of Adrian Paunescu, a gifted poet who first caught the public eye two decades ago, as one of the young poets of the liberalization. His Rabeslaian appetites, showmanship and healthy impudence soon turned him into a kind of court jester for the régime. In his writing protest and sarcasm went along with an immoderate flattery of the ruling family. Paunescu soon became the director of a popular weekly and a rich and powerful figure. More daintily and ominously, he obtained permission to organize mass meetings for the young, which gradually turned into a mixture

of circus, revivalist preaching and Nuremberg rally. They achieved a kind of orgasmic, hypnotic effect on their tens of thousands of participants. But after more than ten years of activity the rallies were suddenly banned last summer amid accusations of corruption. Paunescu lost his editorship, was threatened with criminal proceedings and then assigned to a lowly staff position on an ideological weekly.

A look at his poetry suggests why he was, and remains, a poet with great appeal. Some of the poems are mere versified sloganeering or bare-faced flattery, others are unusually courageous statements in defence of older people (a category furiously persecuted by the régime) or of poor farmers. But it is surprising how many of the poems express self-loathing and dwell perversely on impotence, ugliness and discouragement. This is the other side of Paunescu's demagogic rhetoric, and, aesthetically speaking, the only valid one. The lyrical persona appears here as a spineless, frightened and lowly creature trying in vain to escape its doom. Perhaps these two aspects of Paunescu correspond to the troubled state of Romania's psyche, with its combination of pain, indignation and acquiescence.

Grace under pressure

Michael Parker

MIRCEA DINESCU
Edelene a Peppercorn
Edited and translated by Andrea Deletant and Brenda Walker
82pp. Forest Books, 20 Forest View, Chingford, London E4. £5.95.
0948259 000
ANDREA DELETANT and BRENDA WALKER
(Editors)
Silent Voices: An anthology of contemporary Romanian women poets
161pp. Forest Books. £6.95.
0948259 003

"However rootedly national it may be", Ted Hughes has written, "poetry is less and less the prisoner of its own language . . . perhaps it is only now being heard for what, among other things, it is — a universal language of understanding, coherent behind the many languages, in which we can all hope to meet." Forest Books, and the translators and editors, Andrea Deletant and Brenda Walker, are to be commended for bringing to our attention these Romanian writers.

Readers hoping to find in Mircea Dinescu a Romanian poet with the stature of Miroslov Holub, Zbigniew Herbert or Vasko Popa will be disappointed, and though Dennis Deletant makes reference to Dostoevsky and Mandelstam in his rather clumsy and overblown introduction (which praises Dinescu's use of "fantasy . . . to express reality", his "unusual metaphors and similes" which "bring his images into sharp focus" in order to portray "the tragic force of the human condition") we are in fact presented with an interesting young poet whose work at this stage might have shown to better advantage in an anthology of Romanian poetry, rather than a whole book. *Exile on a Peppercorn* does contain some fine poems which movingly record the ebbing of "the sea of faith" in the poet and the world, perceived as a "space from which God has fled", where the stars are "the white cells of the drowned", and where "sailors now throw sheaths not messages". His rage and sorrow at lost idealism and rank corruption generate memorable images, such as those of "Chinese Nicknacks".

In the year two hundred B.C. the (Chinese) poet Li-bai peeling an orange discovered a small ballerina inside during the No-Tank dynasty. In the year 1986 I, while excitedly peeling an orange was suddenly overcome by a wave of mercuric sulphate and the little worn now ruler of that core shouted at me furiously "Stop believing in legends, fool!" — but can equally result in catalogues of Crowley-like horrors and stridency — "stop kissing me — my blood gushes out / Cut my veins — so I can breathe".

Poet, translators and readers would have been better off with an introduction supplying more biographical detail, and creating some sense of Dinescu's Romanian context.

By contrast, Fleur Adcock provides an informative introduction to the *Silent Voices* anthology, in which she accurately identifies the qualities of "passion and grace", "tenderness and power" in these distinguished variations on familiar themes. The title derives from "Fragment" by Liliana Ursu, which speaks of renewal despite oppression and rage, and is typical of the positive and resilient attitudes of the women writers represented:

With silent voices they sing
they defend themselves
admit their faults
donate their blood
swear at darkness
sweat at the light
and yet
they are born

Particularly impressive are the poems of Maria Banus, which depict the vulnerability of childhood, adulthood and old age, each stage with its fragile "ramparts" offering minimal protection against time. "Amazing" shows a mother attempting temporarily "to cover the emptiness lying ahead of the children", while "Time" contrasts "October velvet" and the "sumptuous angle" of the hope-bearing storks with the "slit" nrthrite fingers of the ageing speaker, who already leans "on the shoulder / of my seductive killer".

Admirers of Eastern European poetry who are familiar with the marvellous reinterpretations of classical and traditional fables in Herbert, Holub and Pilinszky will delight in Ana Blandiana's poem "The Couple", which starts by recalling Aristophanes' fable, in *The Symposium*, of the two-headed, eight-limbed humans, and ends powerfully with Orpheus and Eurydice:

Oh, only we know the longing
To look into each others' eyes
And so at last understand,
But we stay back to back,
Grow like two branches
And if one should tear away,
Sacrificing all for a single look,
You would only see of too other
The back from which you came
Bleeding, shivering,
Tearing.

In "Pieta", perhaps the finest poem in the book, Blandiana reanimates the most moving icon of Catholic art, as Christ articulates his love for his mother-bird, who accepts suffering, but cannot humanly comprehend the mystery. It prefigures Doina Uricaru's epiphany of motherhood later in the anthology.

Silent Voices presents the reader with an interesting range of material, from the subtle evocations of childhood in the poems of Nina Cassian to the acute sexual tensions in the work of Iona Grădinescu, the very political satire of Daniela Crăciunaru's "Everything is for our own good" and "The Stage Dressing Room".

Killing with reason

Michael Wood

RICHARD STARK
The Black Ice Score
154pp. £8.95.
0850316812
The Man with the Getaway Face
155pp. Paperback, £2.95.
0850317353
The Juggler
159pp. £8.95.
0850316812
Allison and Bushy.

Richard Stark, alias Donald E. Westlake, alias Tucker Coe, has written some sixteen thrillers centring on Parker (no first name), a sturdy, long-lived crook who specializes in planning and violence (that is, "planning an operation so it runs smoothly, and . . . stopping any outsider who might be thinking of lousing things up"), working with others who provide different skills (such as cracking safes and doing as they are told). He lives in Florida under a pseudonym ("I never work in Florida", he says, "I play there"), owns a few parking lots and petrol stations as a cover for his ill-gotten but taxable income, and does a job whenever funds start to dwindle. His motto is "keep it simple". He is not cruel, just impersonal, and doesn't do things without a reason — or when he does, he regrets it:

It was dangerous to kill when there wasn't enough reason, because after a while killing became the solution to everything. . . . Parker had killed without enough reason twice, both times because he was impatient, and one time the killing could be matched to an FBI card with his prints on it.

Most of these books were written in the 1960s and two have been turned into well-known films: Godard's *Made in USA* and Boorman's *Point Blank*. *The Juggler* and *The Black Ice Score* are published in Britain now for the first time. In *The Black Ice Score* Parker gets entangled with a new African nation and a bauld of diamonds the country would like back; in *The Man with the Getaway Face* he gets a new face through plastic surgery ("the one he'd carried around till then had gotten unpopu-

Unto this Dust

John Clute

ROBERT SILVERBERG
Tom O'Bedlam
320pp. Gollancz. £9.95.
0575037733

A sickness unto death reigns in the Cnllformin of 2100 as Robert Silverberg's smoothly elegant new novel begins its slow course to apocalyptic. *Tom O'Bedlam* is about the end of things, even though the sustained note of ambivalence in its last pages does manage to suggest the possibility of transcendence.

Some time in the twenty-first century, a Dust War has occurred, seemingly between the two superpowers. Since that point, everything has been running down. It is not hard to see why.

For a hundred years everyone worries about the horrors of atomic war . . . and then the atomic war comes, not with bombs but very quietly, with its lethal radioactive dust . . . great chunks of land melt permanently unlivable overnight while life goes on in an ostensibly normal way outside the dusted places. Nations fall apart when bands of hot dust are spread through their midst.

For the characters in the novel, even though complex relics of the hi-tech world continue to ease their days, it is too late. The best lack all lustre; it is the twilight of the species.

Tom O'Bedlam, whose mother was impregnated in a Dust storm, comes to California, bearing waking dreams of great urgency. Though distant space is barred to humanity because of the limiting factor of the speed of light, these dreams take the shape of messages of clarity and hope, clemently and meltingly ironic, from innumerable species that throng the universe. For Tom, who may be insane, the message is clear: having fouled its nest, humanity must now leave the planet Earth, must take the Crossing. This will involve dropping the body, for the corruptible must put on incorruptible.

lar"), and is pursued by the good doctor's loyal chauffeur because the doctor has been killed and the chauffeur thinks Parker did it. He didn't — he always avoids complications — and is busy masterminding an armoured truck robbery, and watching out for Alma ("Her eyes were sullen and angry, glaring out at a world that had never given her her due"), who is trying to double-cross him. In *The Juggler* the man who knows about Parker's new and old faces — indeed knows a great deal about Parker — has died suddenly, and Parker is checking out the scene for incriminating clues. He runs into a wonderfully unsavoury local chief of police, who has been torturing Parker's contact for his secrets. Parker is very glad to see the extortioner go. "It was a fine suicide note", we learn, especially since it wasn't suicide.

Stark's writing is muted, efficient, short on adjectives, like Parker. *The Juggler* opens: "When the knock came at the door, Parker was just turning to the obituary page." That's a sentence which promises a lot by saying nearly nothing. There is a bit too much hitting and beating of people in these pages, as if to prove that Stark, rather than Parker, is the tough guy, but there is also a real world here, shabby, muddled, waiting for Parker to clear it up. And Parker is not quite as straightforward as he looks. He is almost an ideologue. Here he is thinking about his wife who tried to kill him:

She was the only one he'd ever met that he didn't feel sorry about. With everybody else in the world, the situation was simple. They were in and he worked with them or they were out and he ignored them or they were trouble and he took care of them. But with Lynn he hadn't been able to work that way.

He felt for her what he'd never felt for anybody else or anything else, not even himself, not even money.

What humanizes Parker is his failure to acknowledge or cope with the human, his meticulous attempts to shut it away. I don't mean that we come to like him, or find some little chink in his armour where warm human sentiment can come pouring in or out. I mean only that Parker stands out slightly from his cramped, mean environment. The difference is tiny — Stark's register is remorselessly narrow, but he uses it with skill, and he knows how small his world is.

In northern California, at the Nepenthe Center where psychotherapists mind-pick criminal patients until they are cured by forgetting whatever has twisted them, Elisabeth finds her staff and inmates increasingly dominated by shared dreams of the Nina Planets, and of hieratic beckoning figures. To the south, in San Diego, a cult with origins in Brazilian spiritism begins to espouse Chungira-Ho-Will-Come and Maguali-ga, hieratic beckoning figures who signal the end of humnity's time on Earth.

Wherever Tom, a ragged mendicant, happens to be, such dreams proliferate. Either he creates them, or merely augments them. Either they are manifestations of a race's despair, or the tortured species may indeed have new life, as it says in Revelations, which is quoted throughout, along with the seventeenth-century poems that give Tom his name. When the cultists and Tom finally converge on the Nepenthe Center, the Crossing begins. With the aid of some extraordinary narrative effects, Silverberg makes it manifest that it simply cannot be said whether or not the Crossing is death or transcendence. Of human culture on this planet, however, one way or another, it is the end.

One of the American academic firms whose interest in science fiction has done much to legitimate the form for scholars has published a two-volume bibliography of Robert Silverberg. It is far from complete. Like Georges Simenon, Silverberg wrote many pseudonymous "apprentice" novels in his early years, and it is unlikely that anyone knows just how many books have preceded *Tom O'Bedlam*. This latest novel shows the benefits of Silverberg's intense professionalism. Such competence seems capable of doing its job without heightened emotion. Only in the closing pages does one feel the author genuinely stretching himself in acts of technical bravura, keeping the reader on tenterhooks and giving intense delight.

TLS

The Times Literary Supplement

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My sampling of the entries and references found an impressive standard of accuracy; the generous cross-referencing given makes browsing an almost mandatory pleasure, and it will indeed be a learned reader who does not find something he did not previously know on almost every page.

For a long time there has been a need to replace the useful but very outdated *Classical Dictionary* of Lemprière. For factual and historical matters this was done years ago by the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, and with the publication of Pierre Grimal's *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, Lemprière can finally be relegated to the shelf reserved for books which have honourably outlived their usefulness."

— C. Leach TLS 8th August 1986

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by Pierre Grimal, translated by A. R. Maxwell-Hyslop

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Few poets writing in Armenian enjoy the world-wide popularity afforded to those writing in, say, Greek or even Turkish, yet the small Armenian nation has produced a surprising number of good poets. If they are hardly known beyond their borders it is because they have lacked translators of distinction and, equally important, sympathetic readers. Lately, however, some excellent translators have been at work and Diana Der Hovanessian's renderings of Eghishe Charents are superb. The book was a team effort: Marzbed Margossian provided a literal translation which Der Hovanessian reworked into poetic form.

Charents was the principal Armenian poet of the Bolshevik revolution. Born in Kars, a small north-eastern Anatolian city that passed back and forth between Turkish and Russian hegemony, he was an impressionable teenager during the ghastly Armenian massacres that occurred in 1915 and after. Through this he became a supporter of the anti-Turkish imperialism that shortly, with the passing of the tsar's power, became part of the Great Revolution. This upheaval produced, along with a temporarily independent Azerbaijan and Georgia, an independent Armenia which lasted for three chaotic years before joining the great Soviet confederation. Charents wrote about this transition. He passionately supported the Communist cause until his tragic death in 1937, at the age of forty.

He had strong poetic instincts from an early age, as a poem written in his late teens shows: In the street, there is something nameless, incomprehensible, darting like an ungovernable, yawning.

You hear it, feel its presence but cannot understand exactly what brushed you as it passed. This is not yet great poetry, and the jerks and lurchings of the translation reflect faithfully the imperfection of the youthful original. Yet it is an impressive effort; here is a young writer in whom one can believe.

Somewhat later, Charents, obsessed by the recent massacres, wrote a lengthy work called "The Dantesque Legend", which captured the contemporary mood of Armenian intellectuals. In it, the poet-narrator travels the ridges and roads of eastern Turkey, finding death everywhere, his Armenian nation a lifeless corpse: "Suddenly on the road, a body. We stopped and looked at each other. It was already rotting."

Soon he was more optimistic, writing of the revolution and of Armenia's place in it. As in all Armenian poetry, strong emotionalistic urges come out clearly: "I love the sun-baked taste of Armenian words." Charents saw Armenia as being at a turning-point where the nation must make a choice. For him the choice was Communism, and he soon understood the slogans:

If any glory were to be assigned to us it would come from the fermenting vigor those peasants carried, their energy of spirit.

He captured the rhetoric of the Stalin years, when things became their opposites: It is for us, it seems, to be like the fat camel who, contrary to Christ's parable, will enter the fine needle's eye into the paradise of the future.

It is for us, like the rich man enriched in the nakedness of the past, to inherit the loss of our centuries, which is destined by heaven for the naked.

There is a lot here that an Armenian can identify with; Charents had become the voice of his nation, and a compelling voice he is, virile and strong, and forgetful of Armenia's distressing past:

Oh ancestors, I see you in the depth of the past on the dark roads, hungry, mangy, scabby-pelted, walking your wolf toward Mount Ararat. Though Charents's poetry is of the first rank, his selected prose is not of quite the same calibre. Nor are the translations in *Across Two Worlds* as good. The best pieces show Charents at his most surreal, but his prose generally lacks the exaltation of his quatrains.

Dublin exposures

James Raven

RICHARD CARGILL COLE
Irish Booksellers and English Writers 1740-1800
266pp. Mansell. £27.50.
0 7201 1808 5

Despite recent advances in our understanding of author-publisher relations and the circulation of books in eighteenth-century Britain, the Irish book trades have failed to attract much attention. Hundreds of titles were published in Dublin and Belfast during the century. Some were the result of arrangements with authors and booksellers in mainland Britain, but many more were unauthorized editions. London booksellers complained bitterly of cheap Irish piracies flooding the market. Richard Cargill Cole's aim is to chart the "contribution by Irish booksellers to the dissemination of the major British writings". In fact, his study concentrates upon the Irish reprints of eight selected British authors and the relationship between Irish bookselling and the growth of the American book trade. Even so, *Irish Booksellers and English Writers 1740-1800* is an important contribution to the history of eighteenth-century publishing.

The book expands Cole's seminal articles on Irish private and community libraries. Much new information is presented on the readership and purchase of Irish books, emphasizing the expansion of the American market by the end of the century. Welcome attention is given to the exact dates of publication and the size of some of the reprinted editions. Cole also stresses the Irish concern over the activities of London booksellers in Dublin, and he questions the grounds for the well-known complaints of the London publishers. As he notes, many writers were by no means annoyed about being pirated in Ireland. Later chapters incorporate the results of much recent research on colonial bookselling. They are perhaps the most valuable part of the study, even though there may be room for argument about the suggested chronology of Irish exports and the decline of the reprint industry.

Cole's book is by no means the final word on the subject, and this is not only because the full *ESTC* is not yet available. By focusing on the four "major" fiction writers and on Dr

Johnson, Boswell, Goldsmith and Gibbon, many important reprinted writings are neglected, including sermons, domestic guides and political and economic works. In fiction also, Irish reprinting boosted the popularity of Sarah Fielding, Coventry, Paltock, Kimber and Chetwood. Very successful Irish editions were made of Cleland, Haywood and Lennox. There were various direct translations from the French, including *Prévost d'Exiles* and *Crébillon fils*. Smollett's translations are only briefly mentioned. The author provides some very helpful appendices, which also indicate editions of the major writers not discussed in the text, although it is surprising that neither the piracies of *Jonah's Wild* nor at least two reprinted Smollett translations are included. The index is less successfully arranged.

Cole's book underlines the need for more research on the business careers of the Dublin booksellers, many of whom were flamboyant operators. The actual printing of the works is outside the scope of the book. No mention is made, for example, of Powell's printing for Robert Main in the 1750s. Quite how the groups of Irish booksellers were organized is an intriguing question still without a satisfactory answer. As Cole notes, the subject was researched by James Phillips in his unpublished work on Dublin bookselling, but here was an opportunity for updating that research and making some of the details more accessible. It would have been helpful to have contrasted the Irish trade with early pirating by Scottish booksellers. Above all, if the aim is to understand the "dissemination" of the reprinted books, then the exact means by which works were exported and circulated on the mainland and in North America remains tantalizingly elusive.

Number Two of the Publishing History Occasional Series recently launched by Cladwyck-Healey (Cambridge and Alexandria, VA) is *Bibliography*, edited by Robin Myers and Michael Harris (172pp, with three microfiches. £25. 0 85964 186 4). It contains seven papers from the London University Extra-Mural Department's bibliographic conference of 1985, including Mirjam Foot's "Bookbinding Patronage in England", Brian North Lee's "Bookplates and Bibliography", Michael Harris's "Collecting Newspapers: Developments at the British Museum during the nineteenth cen-

Patterns and patrons

Nicolas Barker

HANNAH D. FRENCH
Bookbinding in Early America: Seven essays on masters and methods
230pp. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia. \$49.95.
0 91296 76 3

Early American Bookbindings from the Collection of Michael Papantonio
Second edition.
120pp. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia. \$22.50.
0 91296 75 5

It is easy for European students of bookbinding to write off bookbinding in America as another kind of provincial work, distinguishable as Oxford or Cambridge or Scotch bookbinding is from London work by a number of qualities: less originality in design – and that *Irish* too, perhaps – and (to be blunt) a certain roughness, both in the execution of the binding and its finishing. All these signs can be seen in "early" American binding (that is, from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth century). But it would be a great mistake to dismiss all American bindings of the period as inferior, belated imitations of British work.

Almost all the American binders to whom a name can be given and a body of work attributed have qualities that are not merely derivative. All but one of the binders whose work is described by Hannah D. French in *Bookbinding in Early America* were immigrants, but none simply took the style he had been taught and practised it without variation. Almost all seem to have had the immigrant's restless independence of mind. They developed and

altered, noting European changes of style, but not adopting them slavishly. A number of Miss French's binders came from Scotland or the Borders, and features of this can be seen in their work, but it is not because they signed it (which they did but rarely), or because they used a regular series of identifiable tools (in fact they used a surprising number and changed them – William Spawen's catalogues of tools, a notable feature of Miss French's book, demonstrate this), that their work can be identified. There is an individuality about it which identifies the man, and, in time, an "American-ness" which distinguishes all American bindings from their European counterparts.

This is partly due to non-British influences – the presence of books and people (craftsmen or buyers of books) from France or Germany. One of the most distinguished binders, Frederick Mayn, came from Germany, but his work rarely shows signs of that influence alone. This, perhaps, was because his principal patron was Thomas Jefferson, who clearly had ideas of his own on what a book should look like (as on most subjects). Henry Legge did work for Isaiah Thomas and George Washington. Caleb Buglass, from Berwick, worked in cosmopolitan Philadelphia. John Roulstone bound for Harvard University Library. None of these would be content to take what came. A lot of the vigour and originality of American binding comes from the interaction between patron and craftsman.

Miss French has studied all this longer, and with more penetration, than anyone else. The late Michael Papantonio, whose collection of some 700 examples of American binding is the largest and best ever made, provided not merely material for her to work on, but learned and stimulating support. Miss French's case studies, her analyses of techniques, the often brilliant deployment of archival sources to identify binders, are set against the background of the Papantonio collection. The republication of both these works – Hannah D. French's essays from various sources, and *Early American Bookbindings from the Collection of Michael Papantonio*, amplified as a catalogue in its second edition with a memoir – is a valuable service to a subject of more than minor importance. American bookbinding is not a negligible mirror of the society that brought it into being.

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